BOND AND FREE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "CASTE,"

ETC., ETC.

"Zwei sind die Wege, auf welchen der Mensch zur Tugend emporstrebt;
Schliesst sich der eine dir zu, thut sich der andre dir auf.
Handelnd erringt der Glückliche sie, der Leidende duldend.
Wohl ihm, den sein Geschick liebend auf beiden geführt!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BOND AND FREE.

CHAPTER I.

> "His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."

WILFRED could in no way clear himself to himself. It is true that, on that fatal morning, he had been surprised by the temptation of sudden certainty of Felicia's love for him—that his passions had then escaped from his control, and a kind of frenzy had possessed him; but he knew to how many minor temptations he had voluntarily yielded—how many voluntary steps had led up to the involuntary climax.

He had only become the slave of overmastering passion after repeated and voluntary submission to a resistible tyranny.

On his hurried homeward journey Wilfred formed the determination, at all costs, to break off his engagement with Eleanour: not that he had the slightest or most fleeting hope of winning Felicia—a thousand things told him that with her esteem he had lost her love; that he had been her idol, and that the fall from the pedestal of her high estimation had dashed his image in pieces. If the poor child had known how many sources of pain he had found in her conduct at leave-taking, her own pain would have been doubled. Her withdrawal from the room polluted by his presence (so he interpreted that withdrawal)—her involuntary shrinking from him when her mother gave him leave to kiss her—the calmness with which she had extended

her hand—and the calmness of the few last words, to speak which had cost her such a struggle—everything she had said or done was tortured into an expression of the indifference of contempt. No! he was moved to the determination of giving up Eleanour by no hope of winning Felicia. He knew now certainly that he never had loved, and never would love, Eleanour Narpenth; that, however strong had been the attraction of her beauty, her accomplishments, her devotion, and all her nameless power of fascination, these things had not kindled in him answering love, and never could kindle such love; and he understood now, as he had never done before, the danger and the wickedness of marriage without love.

On his arrival in London—travel-worn and thought-worn as he was—Wilfred went directly to Mr. Narpenth's. His arrival was

unexpected. He noticed nothing, asked no questions, but allowed himself to be ushered into the drawing-room, unwashed and unrested as he was.

The room was full of people: its blaze of lights and hum of talk at first dazzled and bewildered him. His appearance caused a momentary lull, which attracted Miss Narpenth's attention just as Wilfred had descried her. She was seated at the piano at the far end of the room—her handsome, animated face turned towards a bearded man who leant over her chair.

Wilfred would willingly have retired—he did not wish to meet Eleanour thus, in public; but Mr. Narpenth's welcoming hand detained him and led him towards the place where she was. She had risen, and her colour had changed: she stood leaning on the piano, irresolute how to meet him, doubtful how he had taken her last letter,

and yet deeply pleased and flattered by the way in which he answered it.

"You come among us like a ghost—we thought you still at Heidelberg!" she said, as her hand entered Wilfred's, and pressed it in a fervent grasp.

"Heidelberg!—pray introduce me to the gentleman who has just left my dear and lovely Heidelberg!—my native town."

As he spoke, the bearded individual who had hung over Miss Narpenth's chair turned a remarkably frank and pleasant face, lighted by a pair of glowing eyes, on Wilfred, and immediately strove to engage him in conversation. Eleanour stood by for a few minutes, then, passing close to Wilfred on her way from the room, said:—

"Escape to the library as soon as you can—you are too tired to be here."

Wilfred gave a sign of assent; the stranger, noticing the "confidence of eyes,"

paused abruptly in the middle of a sentence—to look from Eleanour to Wilfred inquiringly. During this pause all his enthusiasm for lovely Heidelberg seemed to pass off—for when he spoke again, it was coldly and absently. Wilfred soon found an opportunity of withdrawing from the room.

Eleanour had ordered tea to be brought into the library, and she waited there for Wilfred. For the first few moments, while the servant was passing in and out, they stood opposite each other by the fire, and talked of the weather and of Wilfred's journey. When they were alone Eleanour began to pour out tea, and to overwhelm Wilfred by her attentions: she spoke but little and did everything in a feverish, abrupt way which jarred upon his worn nerves painfully.

Wilfred, little at his ease in her presence, presently begged that he might not detain

her from her guests, and apologized for his sudden and, as it had proved, ill-timed appearance. She made him no answer of any kind; but, when she had no longer the occupation of waiting on him, she suddenly came and knelt down before him: folding her white and jewelled arms upon his knees, she looked up searchingly into his face.

He could not bear the look or her attitude.

"For heaven's sake, rise, Eleanour!" he cried; then added in a less tragic tone:—

"You are crushing and spoiling that beautiful dress!"

"Is it beautiful? Am I beautiful in it?" she asked, without rising or moving her eyes from his face.

"You know you are beautiful in it—and you also know that it was not put on for me."

Wishing to give a light tone to the con-

versation he went on to speak in further praise of her dress, and to admire the ornaments she wore on her neck and arms, and in her hair. She did not heed what he said, but kept her position and continued to gaze into his face.

"Do not look at me to-night," he said, nervously; "I have travelled without stopping; I feel worn out. To-morrow——"

He paused, thinking of what must be said to-morrow. Already it began to seem to him impossible that he should have the courage to say what must then be said, if he kept his resolution.

"To-morrow you will quarrel with me, I suppose," Eleanour spoke with a certain air of defiance.

"Do not let me keep you here," he said again. "I am thoroughly stupefied and bewildered to-night, and you look brilliantly lovely. The sight of you dazzles my

tired eyes. Indeed, you must rise, Eleanour—I cannot bear to see you there, on your knees before me."

She let him lift her up: then she walked to the fire, leant her head against the marble mantel-piece, and burst into tears—stormy passionate tears which startled and annoyed him. When he approached and spoke to her she turned, threw herself into his arms, and hid her face upon his shoulder.

"You are angry with me about that letter, and so you will kill me by coldness," she said, when she was calm enough to speak. "Just now I was longing to ask you whether you still love me; but I do not ask it—I dare not ask it—your 'no' would crush me. I thought that perhaps you had lost some of your power over me—that I might learn to give you up, if you did not love me — but I cannot—I cannot! I love you beyond my

life or my pride. I cannot give you up—I cannot, and I will not—not even if you ask me—I cannot and I will not believe that you do not love me."

Wilfred spoke vaguely soothing words, and felt as if his weak heart must break or his weak will yield. "Oh, for rest, even for the rest of death!" was the cry of his soul while he held that beautiful woman in his arms.

Looking up into his face, Eleanour said presently:—

"You say I was not dressed for you to-night; that is true—I was trying if I could be pleased to please another than you. You come; and I feel at once that I do not care for the praise and admiration of all the world if you do not love me."

Eleanour did not let Wilfred start apart from her when the door was opened; Mr.

Narpenth entering, found her resting in Wilfred's arms; his first words were:—

"So! you have made it up, children. Eleanour has been very angry and very jealous, Wilfred."

"Say nothing about that now, papa," Eleanour begged. Soon after she left them—to compose her face, shake out her tumbled skirts, and then return to the drawing-room.

"Have you any recent news of Ireton?" Wilfred asked, his thoughts turning to what began to seem the only chance of respite—the chance of Mr. Ireton's death.

"He has alternately sunk and rallied many times: he may live on thus for years. Suspense, and the petty persecutions she is subject to from her brother, wear Eleanour's spirits cruelly; I have resolved to let you fix your wedding-day between you—as early a day as you both choose. Eleanour loves you devotedly; she

would never relinquish you—no end is to be served by waiting—I wish to see her happy. And so——"

Wilfred interrupted:—

"May I talk with you in the morning? I have no head for anything now."

"Yes, yes—you sleep here of course. Your room is ready. I won't keep you up—you don't look as robust as I could wish, but that is only owing to the fatigue of your hurried journey, I hope."

With a cordial "Good night" Wilfred was dismissed to his luxurious chamber.

"Retreat is impossible," he thought, as he tossed on his bed and sought sleep vainly. He felt indeed that he was weak, and that to be weak is to be miserable. His soul was full of the bitterest self-contempt, but to release himself from his bonds seemed a thing beyond his power. He longed, with fevered intensity of long-

ing, to have the tangled and mysterious skein of his life unravelled for him—to feel the cool, calming hand of death laid on his brow and breast.

He made himself think of Eleanour—of her beauty as she had knelt before him, her white arms and shoulders bare, and her splendid eyes searching his face; he thought, too, of her love which showed itself with such passionate, impetuous abandonment; overwhelming her pride, proving itself so grandly disinterested. Surely such love might in time kindle answering love. Such love!—true it was not such a pure and pale, mild and yet strong, flame as had been his ideal of woman's love; but it was such love as God had made it this woman's nature to feel—and how should he dare put his ideal higher than God's real?

He thought of Eleanour as at that very hour waking, perhaps weeping, in some near

chamber; mourning over his ungenerous coldness, and over the resistless might of her own passion—and his thoughts of her grew warm and tender. She not being by—to make him vividly conscious of the uncongeniality of their natures—he again began to believe it impossible but that he should learn to love so beautiful and so devoted a woman.

"I must marry her—and I must make my life one endeavour to reward her for her generous love."

There was a superficial nobility, a show of self-sacrifice, about this resolve that soothed Wilfred; at last, just as it grew light, he fell asleep.

Wilfred slept late; when he went down Mr. Narpenth had left the house. Eleanour, who dreaded this interview, looked so pale and sad, so almost meek, that his heart smote him. He told her of what

her father had said to him; and—being feverishly anxious to escape from the possibility of further wavering—he pleaded with lover-like eloquence that she would marry him soon. After his marriage he hoped that the calm of irrevocability would settle on his life; and calm was the great good for which he now longed.

His warmth and eloquence made Eleanour kindle—her large eyes shone with love, and a glow of pleasure fixed itself on her cheek.

"I promise you, Wilfred," she said, at the close of a long morning spent together, "that I will never be jealous of your work, as a weaker woman might be. I shall not let you settle down to slothful ease—I shall triumph in your fame! Oh! Wilfred, we will lead a glorious life!"

She looked grandly beautiful as she spoke. Wilfred, leaning his head on his

hand, watched her admiringly—called her his Sybil, and satisfied her proud heart with praise.

"He does love me," she thought. "What if, while he was away from me, he had a pale, passing passion for that Felicia? I can forgive him. Have I not loved before?—and yet I love him deeply and desperately—"

Just then a servant announced "Mr. Edler;" and that bearded native of Heidelberg, and admirer of Miss Narpenth, entered.

Eleanour's reception of her visitor was cold, almost repelling, but he was not to be disconcerted thereby.

"You asked me to come in and look at your last picture," he said to her, after he had sat chatting some time. Turning to Wilfred, he added:—

"Miss Narpenth was one of my first

pupils. I have given her lessons—both abroad and after I came to England—and I am proud of my pupil."

He rose and led the way to the studio. Eleanour followed him, but Wilfred did not.

Mr. Edler looked at everything and criticized everything—not paying any heed to Eleanour's ungracious manner, which plainly expressed her desire that he should be gone.

"Rather a successful likeness," he said, taking up a canvas that had been turned towards the wall. "But, while you have hardly done justice to the delicate refinement of detail in the features, you have given a fire and force to the expression that are wholly wanting in the original. I am sure you never saw so determined a look about that mouth, or such concentration of purpose in those eyes."

"This is not the picture for which I desired your criticism," Eleanour said, try-

ing to take the portrait from his hand; but he retained it, and imprisoned her fingers, while he gazed into her eyes—not boldly, but very fixedly and resolutely, as if reading his fate in them. She coloured deeply, and, turning her head away, looked uneasily towards the room in which she had left Wilfred.

"Is it so?" he asked. "Is the past so completely forgotten? Has such a gulph opened between us?"

"It was a very foolish past—a girl and boy's dream," Eleanour answered, hurriedly. "Never mind the pictures—let us go back to the drawing-room."

"My share of the dream has been motive strong enough to make me work my way up in life with clenched teeth and clenched hands, and—"

"I cannot hear this, Mr. Edler. I am sorry, very sorry—"

"Am I to give up the hope that I have held so long—utterly—at once?"

He spoke quietly, but his lips whitened and his eyes flamed.

"In a few months I shall marry Mr. Mason."

"Thank you for that much of frankness. You may continue to rely upon my discreet silence concerning the past. For your future, I wish you all happiness. I have a feeling that we do not part for ever to-day. Time will show. I shall never love any other woman, even if I meet with one more worthy of *constant* love."

She could not tell if he were most hurt or angry, grieved or contemptuous. She could not even tell to what extent he had been serious. He was gone; and, holding Wilfred's portrait in her hand, she went back into a dream of the past—of

the past when she had loved Hermann von Edler, a poor Art student—from which dream she roused herself with a sigh.

"And so he has remembered me all these years, it seems!" she said to herself, as she went slowly back to the room where she had left Wilfred. "And a little of the love I lavish upon Wilfred, and might almost as well lavish upon his effigy in marble, would bring Hermann to my feet—ready to die there with rapture. I cannot help it—I cannot help it! It is my fate and not my fault."

CHAPTER II.

> "The soul is lapped in a false peace serene;
> Fate, with the stern face of an angry friend,
> Heading a band of troubles, steps between."

ON a perfectly fair summer evening, having perfect promise of a perfect morrow, Eleanour and Wilfred were together—on the hill behind the cottage where Wilfred had so long lodged. At the little church of Thorndon they were to be married in three days.

Eleanour sat on the trunk of a felled tree, leaning back against a spreading oak, and Wilfred lay at her feet. He

had been thinking and speaking of his past life—always a lonely, often a miserable life; whether miserable or not, always an unanchored, unsatisfied, unsatisfactory life. He had been speaking also of the persistent Fate which had brought his life and Eleanour's together—of their meeting on the wild Welsh shore, on the Rhine boat, and on the white road near the quiet little English village; and as he thought and spoke, he gazed upon his beautiful betrothed, and felt only gratitude for her love, tender affection for herself, and an earnest determination to do what in him lay to make her happy. Eleanour was beautiful to-night, content dwelt on her mouth, happiness shone from her eyes, and her brow was calm and serene: the hand and arm resting on Wilfred's shoulder were a marvel of blue-veined, creamy whiteness, of satin smooth

softness; his lips were often pressed upon that hand and arm.

By-and-by Wilfred took out his note-book, the same in which he had often written at Heidelberg; he scribbled down some verses—read them to Eleanour—and, as he listened to her fond praise, let the book fall by his side, without heeding that it did so.

"I wish I had my colour-box and sketch-book, that I, too, might make a tiny sketch by which to recall this happy evening!" Eleanour said.

"Let me fetch them—tell me where to find them."

"I will not have you go—it was only a passing whim. If I had my things I should not use them—I am too idly happy."

"But I should like you to make just a small sketch to-night—of the common,

the low purple hills, and the sky. Where are your box and your book?"

"In my room, I believe—Mary will find them; but I do not want you to go for them, and I do not think I shall let you go."

She bent over him, imprisoned him with her arms, and kissed him. For a few moments he allowed himself to be her prisoner. The drowsy hum of summer insects, the languid whisper of the wind among the trees, the subdued glory that was over everything, combined to steep his soul in a soft, luxurious dreaminess, from which he roused himself with effort.

The church clock struck eight.

"Release me, darling," he said. "I really want a sketch made to-night, ever so slight a one—if I do not get your colours now, it will be too dark."

He ran down the hill, pausing and turning

once to say—"You are sure you do not mind remaining there alone—I will be very quick."

He was soon out of sight of Eleanour's worshipping eyes.

It was a long time before the maid could find her mistress's sketch-book and colours, such things not being in her department. When at last she gave them to Wilfred he hastened back to where he had left Eleanour, and found her gone.

He searched for her through the small wood; calling her again and again; then, full of vague alarm, he rushed back to the house.

Mr. Narpenth was alone in the drawing-room.

"Where is Eleanour?" Wilfred asked eagerly.

"What have you done to her? is the question. Have you been quarrelling at the eleventh hour?"

"You have seen her? She is safe in the house, then?"

"I met her in the garden a few moments after I saw you rush off towards the hill. She came out of the shrubbery. I told her you had just gone to rejoin her. She did not open her lips, but entered the house and went to her own room."

"Thank God she is safe! But it is very strange that she should not have waited."

"Have you had no quarrel, then?"

"None whatever."

"That something has happened I am sure, by Eleanour's face."

"She must be ill. May I go to her door and speak to her?"

"You had better."

Wilfred bounded up the stairs and knocked at the closed door. He called to Eleanour in a voice of anxious entreaty. He received

no answer, and heard no sound. Trying the door, he found it locked.

"Speak to me, Eleanour—just a word—just to say that you are not ill—only speak to me!"

Still he did not receive the slightest answer, or hear the slightest sound. He returned to Mr. Narpenth to beg that the door might be forced open; he felt sure that Eleanour must have been seized with sudden illness—what else *could* have happened? The words Mr. Narpenth greeted him with, however, stopped those that were upon his own lips.

"See here!"—pointing to the first paragraph of the *Times*, which lay open on the table before him—"Ireton is dead!—died yesterday—suddenly!"

Wilfred turned deathly pale; spider-like and icy-cold spirit fingers seemed to move among the roots of his hair.

"Be composed, and let us think what is to be done," Mr. Narpenth said. "Your marriage may, perhaps, have to be postponed for a few days; a change of name will make more work for the lawyers. The first thing to be done is for you to open the packet you possess. Where is it? Can it be opened at once? I suppose you keep it about you."

"The packet?—my mother's letter? It is in the keeping of—of a friend, who is abroad. I must take a long journey to reclaim it."

"That is vexatious—it will lengthen the delay and suspense."

"I had better start to-night."

"Certainly."

"But I must see Eleanour first."

"Of course. I will order the carriage to take you to town—meanwhile you can see Eleanour."

"I will at least attempt to do so."

Again Wilfred stood before the closed door, his heart beating violently. This time he heard a heavy pacing to and fro. When he spoke there was a pause. He hurriedly explained that he was about to start on a journey—explained the nature of his errand, and entreated Eleanour to let him see her first.

Just as—his patience exhausted—he was about to turn from the obdurate door, it opened, and Eleanour stood before him. Her appearance shocked him: he started back from her—the face that had been so beautiful and so happy a face a few hours before had no beauty now—no beauty of form, colour, or expression; it was distorted by passion, disfigured by rage and hate: the eyes, swollen and inflamed as they were, would alone have marred the loveliness of the most perfect face.

Before Wilfred could recover from the shock her appearance gave him sufficiently

to address her Eleanour spoke—in a harsh, imperious voice that seemed as strange to him as her altered face.

"You are going to Heidelberg?"

"Yes."

"Yes; and the letter which 'is in a friend's keeping'? is that friend a girl—Felicia Southern?"

"Yes."

"Yes," she echoed mockingly, with an evil sneer on her lips. For a moment her eyes flamed furiously into his; then she drew back, and closed the door upon him. So they parted.

Wilfred lingered a few moments; when he turned away, he felt utterly confused: it seemed to him impossible that what had just passed should be real—he felt that he must be wandering through the mazes of a bad dream; but he could not wake! When day dawned he was nearing the coast.

CHAPTER III.

> "In that so heavenly mild and pure fair face,
> Pity hath love's, and love hath pity's grace:
> Which is the sweeter shining in that place—
> Or where one ends, and where begins the other,
> No human eyes may, surely, ere discover."

HEIDELBERG, in its full summer glory, was thronged by tourists and pleasure-seekers. Wilfred's face of pale desperation was in strong contrast with the gay and sunburned faces of the people he met; it drew many eyes upon him as he crossed the square, on his way to the small house in the terraced garden.

Occupied by one intense curiosity, one

absorbing desire, it was not till he had turned from the hot and dusty road into the green and shady garden—not till, the ladies being out, he sat alone in the vine-screened parlour, which had been the scene of so many happy hours, waiting for their return—that the full idea of the pain and embarrassment this sudden meeting would cause presented himself to him.

He found that it would not do to think, and he strove to turn his attention outward—observing how the vine had grown over the window without, and how the ivy within had made new shoots—so that the sun could hardly penetrate the leafy screen.

The wind stirred the snowy curtains; the room was dim and cool—to Wilfred's fevered blood it struck cold; now and again he shivered. A vase of white roses stood on Felicia's table, another near Mrs. Southern's arm-chair; some work and

a few books lay about the scrupulously neat room; everything seemed to speak to him of Felicia. He leant his brow on the folded arms which rested on her little table, and listened to the whirling in his brain, and the irregular pulsation of his heart while he waited.

Evening fell; the dimness of the room had increased to duskness when, at last, Felicia and her mother passed the window.

Mrs. Southern came first—walking and talking briskly. Felicia's step was slow and, Wilfred fancied, weary. At the house-door Mrs. Southern paused, so that Felicia entered the room first; she came in with a thoughtful brow, and with downcast eyes that saw nothing.

Wilfred spoke abruptly, before she had seen him.

"The letter—my mother's letter;

nothing else could have brought me. I want the letter."

> "Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
> And like a ghost without the power to speak."

Mrs. Southern followed almost immediately upon her daughter, and to her Wilfred explained his errand.

A few moments afterwards Felicia stood before him, offering him the long-kept packet. As he took it, he met the sweet pity of her eyes: recalling her face, as it looked then, when he had left it far behind, he knew that it was paler and thinner than he had been used to see it—but he also knew that it was wonderfully clear and untroubled.

"We will leave you," Mrs. Southern said, passing her arm round Felicia, as Wilfred broke the seal.

"No; lend me your eyes; read for me, I cannot read it," he cried.

There was not light enough for Mrs. Southern. Felicia took the letter, held it close to the window, and read:—

"When you have opened this, go quickly to your guardian's house, if you should at that time be absent from it. There you will hear of your mother. If she is dead—or must still, for your good, be dead to you—Martha Smith shall then have power to tell you all that you may know about her. If she is alive and free to claim her son, she herself will meet you there. I am growing strong, Wilfred, in the hope of some day meeting my son. I shall live to be old, yet your guardian believes that I am dying—will believe that I am dead. God forgive me this one more deceit—this for your sake, my heart's darling, because I will not be a link between you and shame. God grant me strength to persevere and so

save you from the knowledge of your father."

The letter was dated—a date of five-and-twenty years ago.

"Read it again!" Wilfred twice entreated.

With haggard eyes, he watched Felicia as she read: quiet tears streamed down her white face, and the last daylight seemed to linger upon it.

"Your poor, poor mother!" the girl breathed out softly.

"My mother!"

"Will you not thank God that she lives to have the joy of seeing her son? I feel that she does live. Will you not thank God that you have a mother?"

"My mother lives—I have a mother!"

Wilfred appeared as if stunned. He did not remove his eyes from Felicia's agitated face; he seemed only capable of echoing her words.

"Go away, dear child—go away for a little while," Mrs. Southern said.

She led her daughter from the room, and then she took a seat close to Wilfred; she laid her hand on his, spoke to him, and strove, as tenderly and as sedulously as if he had been her son, to rouse and soothe him. After a time he said :—

"I will thank God for infinite goodness, if my mother still lives. If she still lives, I will find her."

His face lit up with inexpressible rapture, and he rose, adding,

"I have no time to lose. God reward you for your sympathy, and make me less unworthy of it, and of a mother's love."

"Can you take no rest—no refreshment?"

"I shall not rest, nor eat, till I have found her. I will find her: even if she still tries to hide herself, I will find her. I will joyfully take upon myself what-

ever grief and shame she has borne alone all these long years."

He paused at the door, and looked round the room wistfully—but he did not see Felicia again.

Late into the night the mother and daughter talked of Wilfred, and of Wilfred's mother.

"I do not know what to hope," Mrs. Southern said. "It may be that it would be better for him to find that she is dead. One cannot tell what her sins may have been; one can hardly believe that she is a good woman."

"Think how unselfishly she must have loved her child, though, mamma—to have given him up for what she thought his good, and to have kept her secret for his sake all these lonely years. I do hope she lives, that she may have some happy years to make up for all."

"Wilfred will now, perhaps, have to choose between his mother and his bride. His mother may be such a woman as it would be too great a trial for any girl to accept as a constant companion."

"Let us hope the best, mamma. It seems to me that there must be something very noble about Wilfred's mother, or she could not have acted as she has done. I suppose it was wrong of her, because it was not natural, to give up her child; but surely it was grandly unselfish."

"If her motives were all good and pure, it was. Any way, she must have suffered cruelly, poor thing! We will, as you say, my daughter, hope the best."

"I have a strangely strong feeling that all will end happily."

"Good child! may you be a true prophet."

CHAPTER IV.

"While he lived, I feared his scorn:
He is cold—I creep forlorn
To his feet. I weep and mourn,
Would he could rise and would strike me dead!
Pityful God! what words have I said!
O wipe them out with the tears I shed."

AGAIN, once again, and after so many years, Wilfred stood before his guardian's house—stood waiting to be let in at the once familiar door. He had reached it just at dawn, the fiery dawn of a wild and windy day. The rosy glare struck against black blank windows, and found no entrance. The house that had always been a dead house was now a house of death; but it could not

well look more gloomy than it had always been wont to look since Wilfred remembered it.

The door was opened to him by Mrs. Smith.

"Is she here?—my mother?" was his question.

"Yes." She added, beneath her breath. "I shouldn't have known you. I suppose, though, it is Mr. Wilfred."

The door closed, shutting out light and air—shutting Wilfred within the dusky, mouldy-smelling house. Just then a cry rang through the dead silence; it was not loud, yet it seemed to pierce him through both heart and brain.

As the cry rang out there came down the stairs a woman, the whiteness of whose face was conspicuous in that dusky twilight; she fell heavily into Wilfred's arms, instinctively held out towards her, clasping

hers round him with a clasp like that of one dying. After her cry and the words, "my son! my son!" she did not speak, and her arms fell from round him.

"Poor worn-out thing! Likely enough she has swooned. She has watched for you so long, and had most given you up. Can you carry her, Mr. Wilfred, just in here?"

Mrs. Smith opened the door of the dining-room as she spoke, and proceeded to unclose the shutters; but the fastenings were rusty, and she fumbled over them some time. As Wilfred groped his way into the dark room, carrying his mother, its chilly, sepulchral atmosphere struck to his heart. The obstinate fastenings at last giving way, light streamed in and fell on the face of Mrs. Lister. With a cry for air, Wilfred sank half-fainting upon the ground beside the couch on

which he had deposited his burden. The cool morning-wind, blowing in keenly and kindly, soon restored him.

* * * * *

The funeral was fixed to take place upon that day. A few hours after their meeting the mother and son went together to the room where the dead man lay.

Wilfred saw his mother bow down and press her lips upon the dead hand, murmuring, "for the last time." Then she knelt beside the coffin, hiding her face from him and from the light. He saw how she was shaken by convulsive sobs. Standing by in reverent silence, he marvelled greatly, thinking "she loved this man, then." When she rose, he drew her arm through his, and led her away; but the lingering look she cast upon the face of the stern dead, the deep remorse expressed by the few words she dropped, made a

deep and painful impression upon her son.

When the dead man had been lain in the ground, and all the duties of the day fulfilled, Wilfred and his mother sat together in the dull dining-room. It was not a house and this was not a time in which that woman's heart could feel the full measure of any joy; but as she met the concentration of unutterable tenderness which shone from her son's eyes, her heart literally leapt with happiness.

"Do not love me yet—do not call me mother yet," she said, checking her joy in awe of its fullness. "You must hear much first. Before you decide to give your erring mother an honourable place in your heart you must be her judge."

He kissed her hand, and held it pressed against his cheek.

"For myself, I do not want to know anything, except that you are the mother

who has suffered so much, and so long, for my sake—and from whom, except for a few hours, I never mean to part."

"'Never mean to part!' and Eleanour—"

"I have wronged her cruelly—she must judge me. Till I have seen her again, I can tell you nothing, except that we—you and I—will not part."

"You shall not make this sacrifice for me; if you love her, I will not stand between you."

"Alas! it is not in my power to make any sacrifice. I have been very weak and very wicked. Eleanour, when she knows all, will despise me and give me up. I shall be frank, and tell her all, doing her a very tardy justice. By this time she would have been my wife—my poor, wronged Eleanour!"

"I wonder has *she* been frank with *you?*"

"She has shown devotion and disinterested passion. I have been treacherous, and— I cannot bear to think of my weak wickedness. I shall have no rest till I have ended all. Dear mother, tell me quickly just such bare facts as I ought to tell Mr. Narpenth: my father's name —his—his crime. Is he still alive?"

All joy died out of the mother's face.

"No—no, he is not alive, or you would not have found me here," she answered. "*His* name—and yours, alas, my poor, poor boy—was well enough known five-and-twenty years ago. But he is dead—no one can force it on us now. Tell Mr. Narpenth that you are Verbane's son. You need say no more. The son of a man who betrayed his friend's trust, who was a thief, a forger, and, in intent, a murderer. Do not shrink from me—indeed he is dead, or I would never have claimed

you. He died three years ago, but it was only five days ago that I got certain tidings of his death. You shall see the letter; there is no room for doubt. Oh, yes! Mr. Narpenth knows your father's name; once, when I was by, speaking of execrable criminals he described the career of your father and my husband."

Suddenly the poor woman fell on her knees, raised her clasped hands, and cried:—

"Oh, God! visit not my sins, and the sins of his father, on this, my innocent son. Turn not his heart against his mother. Be pityful to him, and strengthen him to bear his burden."

"Mother, be calm, or I dare not leave you," Wilfred said, as he raised her. "I solemnly declare that I will love, cherish, and reverence you always. I solemnly declare that this knowledge is to me as

nothing—that the joy of finding a mother far outweighs everything else; and that, in my eyes, and, I believe, in God's also, the love you have borne me, and the patience with which you have suffered for me, blot out any sin or transgression of yours. You shall not make me your judge, mother; I am content and proud to be your son."

CHAPTER V.

> "Was dahin ist und vergangen,
> Kann's die Liebe seyn?
> Ihrer Flamme Himmels-gluth
> Stirbt sie, wie ein irdisch Gut?"

THE dewy garden was cool and peaceful. Thorndon House, all open-windowed, turned a sunny, every-day face towards Wilfred, as he approached it early in the morning.

Mr. Narpenth, taking his usual before-breakfast stroll, suddenly came into contact with a man so travel-soiled, so hollow-cheeked, and feverish-eyed, that in him he did not immediately recognize Wilfred.

When he did recognize him, he greeted him in a confused manner, and began to hurry him towards the house, saying :—

"See Eleanour, Mason—see Eleanour! No explanations to me — see Eleanour, Mason, see Eleanour!"

"Not 'Mason'—Verbane is, I find, my name—and I mean to bear it."

Wilfred watched the effect of these words, expecting some sudden recoil from him who claimed this name.

"Verbane," echoed Mr. Narpenth; "I have some associations with the name—at present, I cannot recall when, or where, or how, I have heard it; but see Eleanour, my good fellow, see Eleanour; I do not pretend to understand her, but I think you will find that we have no longer any more right to your secret than has all the rest of the world. I have had no explanation with Eleanour—she will not have

your name mentioned; what the cause of this rapid change is—whether she has just cause for anger—I do not know. I am very sorry for you. I wish you well through the meeting—I wish you well in every way. I shall always remember that you have a claim on me—that you saved my girl's life—and, whatever happens, I shall wish you, too, to remember this."

He grasped Wilfred's hand, and pushed him within the breakfast-room door. Wilfred heard him call his daughter, and then leave the house again.

He had to wait—to wait cruelly long; and he was already faint and weary. Mr. Narpenth's words had, for the first time, recalled to him the exact nature of his parting with Eleanour. At last she came into the room. Her face was sullen and resentful—in her hand she carried a small book.

She spoke first, with cold abruptness.

"Of course, I know your errand," she said; "of course, you remember how we parted; remembering that, you will understand my saying, that I have no interest in any revelations you may have come here to make. I hasten to say this, because you shall not have it in your power to say that anything external to yourself made me give you up—that I shrank from sharing your fortune when it was clouded over, or refused to take a name to which disgrace was attached. Neither—if good fortune has fallen to you and you are come to tell me that, no longer needing my wealth, you mean to share your prosperity with the girl you love—shall you have power to insult me by renouncing me. Remember that, before you have spoken, I say, I give you up and never wish to see your false face again!"

"If you thank Heaven for the interposition which hinders your now being my wife, you do well—but——."

"Most fervently do I thank Heaven for the interposition—which is not what you think."

"You have cause for gratitude. It would have been no enviable lot to have linked your life with that of a man doomed to bear a dishonoured name. A man, too, whom you have so readily learnt to hate. I do not understand what has changed your feelings, and I overlook the studied insult you have cast upon me. You are angry—I accept that anger as my due, though in some ways you do me less than justice. Knowing what I now know, my name and the character of my father——"

"Stop!" she interrupted, imperiously; "I swear that if you could now say (*and if I could believe your words*) 'Eleanour, I love you, and of all women desire you only as

my wife,'—if you could say this, and I could believe this, I would to-day become your wife. You cannot say this. You have used me wickedly and deceitfully—you have let me throw myself at your feet and into your arms, while your heart, if it beat at all, beat for another woman. For what motive you have done this, you only know. My blood burns when I think of the love I have wasted on you—of the passion I have felt for you. I feel that passion still—changed to hate. It is because you are nothing I believed you to be that I give you up—that I hate you and despise you. Yes, sir, hate you. You have humiliated me cruelly—you have trampled upon me—you have set me up as a foil to a meek rival—you have coldly and devilishly played with my heart—you——"

Her passionate voice broke down; she flung herself upon a couch and wept

stormily. He stood by her, waiting till there was a chance of being heard.

"You have said little that I did not deserve, Eleanour," he began at last. "I came here to-day determined to make a full confession to you, and to throw myself upon your mercy. You seem to know more than all my guilt. From what source you have gained your knowledge—who has borne witness against me, I cannot guess—I—"

"You have borne witness against yourself," she cried. "Do you not recognize this? Do you not remember what is written in it?"

Her eyes flashing through tears, she held up the book which he had lost on the hill and had not missed, and shook a folded paper from it.

In a moment now he understood it all. That little book contained both food for

the jealousy of a jealous woman, and for the indignation of a just one. Many poems in it, passionate in Felicia's praise, had been scribbled down on feverish wakeful nights at Heidelberg; never having been looked at by that daylight which they could so ill bear, they had since, till this moment, been completely forgotten.

"You have read the contents of this book?" Wilfred asked.

"Every word. Looking into it that evening on the hill, I soon found I had read too much, or not enough. I took it to my room and read more. Your false heart lay bare before me. I had indeed done you less than justice when I thought you cold."

Wilfred stood silent and abashed, while Eleanour scorned him with eye and tongue. The only mitigation of his guilt that he could have pleaded—her having bestowed

her love on him unsought—it would have been an insult to her, and a further injury, to plead. So he stood a silent mark for her scorn. But her tone changed suddenly to one of anguish as she said:—

"Wilfred! you have made the whole world an evil world for me. You have poisoned my whole life—you have deprived me of faith in the truth and honour of man. How I shall endure to live I do not know! Would you had let me die on that Welsh shore long ago. Oh! Wilfred, why, why did you deceive me—me who loved you so?"

"Be merciful, Eleanour! Each word of yours goes to my heart. Be merciful! I attempt no justification—God knows I have sinned against you! It is no defence to say that I was more weak than wicked in my sin. But be merciful!"

"Heaven only knows how I have loved

you!—you who loved another. We must never meet again. Go now, and remember we must never meet again."

"I shall pray for your happiness, Eleanour. I would, for your sake and mine, that you could let me carry away some assurance of your forgiveness. It is true, that I have never loved you with the one love, Eleanour; but I did not know that surely till the last few months. If I had married you, it would have been the study of my life to make you happy—to reward you for your generous, devoted love."

"Stop! Say no more—I cannot bear your voice! Go quickly. I do not want to have my anger wiped out! I do not want to feel that you have been little more wrong than I!" She had seized his arm with both her hands as she bade him leave

her. Gazing into his face, the thought crossed her—

"He will not live to be Felicia's. He is dying!"

"I do forgive you," she said aloud. "The blame has not been all yours."

"God reward you for those words of forgiveness, Eleanour."

Suddenly, stormily she closed him in her arms, drew his head down to a level with her own, and pressed her lips to his again and again.

"I did love you!" she cried; "and I shall never, never, see you again! God pity me, for I think I love you still!"

Those last words of hers were barely audible. As Wilfred staggered from the house Eleanour rushed to her own room.

CHAPTER VI.

"Wer harrte liebend bei mir aus?
Wer steht mir tröstend noch zur Seite?"

THE mother took her weary son home—to a cottage near Tyngelt, a small town in a mining district, not far from the coast. This cottage had been her own retreat since she left Mr. Narpenth's. Up and down a natural terrace near the top of one of the swelling green hills which rose behind the cottage Wilfred paced one serene September afternoon. He had been ill, and was still weak, with that delicious weakness of convalescence which is as a sense of new birth, giving a charm of exquisite freshness

to all pleasures both of soul and sense. The terrace up and down which he paced—often pausing to gaze out seawards—overlooked a small bay, in which emerald-green and crystal-clear water was for ever fretting itself into foaminess among black and jagged rocks. The little bay was one of a chain of similar bays, and Wilfred from his elevation could see the deeply-indented, ship-wrecking coast, guarded by fearfully-fantastic gigantic blocks of broken cliff, stretching away on either side of it. It was late afternoon now; the white sea-birds were whirling homewards, glittering in the level beams and against the deepening blue of the cloudless sky: their human-like screams and weird laughter were the only sounds that reached Wilfred; for, though the water imprisoned in the bay fretted and foamed, the sea was a calm expanse, into which the sun would soon dip calmly;

and there was no roar and dash of heavy breakers to send their voices to where he stood.

On this scene Wilfred gazed with a feeling as of consciousness of moving beneath a new heaven, upon a new earth. His mother's love had apparently exercised a renewing power upon his spiritual as upon his physical life; his mother's love, which seemed to him a love compounded of all that is best in all human loves; a love quiet in its perfectness, its utter meekness, and its freedom from all taint of selfishness. "A soul shall be saved by love." Through and by such a love, would not a nature like Wilfred's be surely drawn unto God's love? To-day he wept and was not ashamed, as his thoughts dwelt long upon the infinity of God's love and mercy, manifested to him. He felt as if all burdens had fallen from his soul—as if he were free to walk—free spirit through

free life—on and on towards eternity, bearing only the cross which, voluntarily taken up, is no burden.

All mortals, till they yield up their wills, move beneath a sense of weight. Mere existence is a burden. Some groan beneath, and fret against, and curse their load: others recognize in it a glorious symbol of immortality—the presence of a dim consciousness of power, superfluous to all the requirements of this life, which the will ever vainly strives to use and to comprehend. It is only when we take up the cross that we can wholly throw off all other burdens. The bearing of that cross of utter resignation to God's will—which seems possible to so few till they are unwilled by the hand of death—precludes the consciousness of other burdens.

The blow which he had dreaded all his life had fallen. Wilfred found himself heir

to a disgraced name—the son of a father whose fame was infamy. Instead of sinking beneath a knowledge the mere dread of which had done so much to crush all true manliness out of him, he began to see that it was the striving of his own will against God's will—consequent upon the want of faith—that had wearied him and weakened him, till he had possessed no strength to bear his real burdens—or to fight the fight with self and sense required of all men—but had allowed himself to fall into that abject passivity beneath the sway of his own passions, which had made him alternately the plaything and the slave of circumstance.

Planting firmer feet upon the soil, raising resolute eyes to heaven, Wilfred asked for strength and life to make his future different—strength and life to do some service to God by serving his fellow-men.

The sun set into the sea; the wind sprang up suddenly, driving the tide into the rocky bay with greater force; the sea-birds after congregating on the cliffs gradually disappeared in their crevices. Wilfred turned his eyes towards the nest-like cottage at the foot of the hill; he saw his mother come out into the small garden and look upwards, seeking him; a few moments brought him to her side.

"You stayed rather late—it is cold for you—come in and drink the coffee I have made," was her greeting.

They went in arm-in-arm, and Wilfred was made to rest by the bright little fire which had been kindled in his absence.

"What are these?" he asked, pointing to old letters and newspapers which were arranged upon the table.

"I shall be happier when you know all. I want you to read these to-night—what

they do not tell you I have written on this paper."

"And it has pained you! I see it in your face, and hear it in your voice. Did I not tell you that I was satisfied to have you for my mother—that I wanted to know no more?"

"It is for his sake—that you may think of him more justly——"

"For his sake! My father's?"

"I was not thinking of your father, but of—of your guardian," she said, in a voice low and tremulous. There followed silence.

"I shall leave you," she added, presently; "I have promised to visit a sick woman in the village to-night—I could not bear to sit by you while you read these."

After lingering a few moments—lighting the candles, drawing the curtains, and making up the fire—she left the house.

Wilfred, contending with almost invincible reluctance, turned to those papers.

At seventeen Hesther Grey had allowed herself to be betrothed to Mr. Ireton, then thirty-seven. She was an orphan, and not happy with the relatives under whose care she had been placed. She had not found out that she had a heart: she respected Mr. Ireton, and was flattered by his preference.

Soon after the engagement, however, a young relative of her aunt's—who was the son of Ireton's oldest and dearest friend, and filled a confidential post in his employ—came on a visit to the quiet country-house which he had never before honoured by his presence. Whether mere idle love of mischief or deliberate malice prompted this first visit of Wilfred Verbane's, no one could tell. Mr. Ireton, always a diligent man of business, was especially

occupied at that time—working doubly then, for leisure by-and-by, and using present leisure to superintend the building of a house in a spot where Hesther had once said she should like to live. His visits to his betrothed were few: he was a man of deeds, not words, and his short, dry letters revealed to her eager and inexperienced eyes little of the love and tenderness treasured up in the storehouse of his heart, to be one day lavished on his young wife.

That first visit of Wilfred Verbane's was repeated; he took care to let Hesther know, and to conceal from everyone else, that she was the attraction which drew him to Stone Hall. That he might go to work more unsuspectedly, he paid open court to the daughter of a neighbouring house. Cold and cautious when others were present, he was ardent and daring when

he found himself alone with his young and beautiful victim. He fed his love by hate at first—for he hated his employer; afterwards he fed his hate by love, for he soon began to feel the passion he had feigned. Only a few years older than Hesther—but used to society and admiration, experienced in evil, and practised in most ways of wickedness—singularly handsome, with a manner towards women of soft caressing fascination—gifted with the ready and superficial cleverness that ensures success in the world and dazzles the inexperienced, and also with the perfect self-confidence which looks like unconscious frankness—accustomed from infancy to compass his own ends by deceit and cunning, and perfectly unfettered by any principles likely to impose self-restraint—Wilfred Verbane succeeded in captivating the fancy and rousing the passions of the girl for

which his love was such as an utterly selfish and sensual nature is capable of. Love, revenge, and self-interest—for Hesther was an heiress—all combined to make him determine that he would win her.

He gained his footing step by step, leaving no way of winning influence untried. He practised upon her natural indignation at Mr. Ireton's apparent neglect, till he had fanned it into a fierce flame: by dwelling on his harsh sternness he deepened her slight awe of him into positive fear; and he worked upon her tender-heartedness, speaking pathetically of his own sad position, orphaned and dependent upon a tyrant.

All this was done gradually, subtly—so skilfully, that her heart melted towards the schemer, as it rebelled against his master; while, insensibly to herself, her pity for the oppressed, and resentment

against the oppressor, combined to feed a clandestine passion. A servant-girl in the house was bribed, and taken into the confidence of the lovers. Notes containing expressions of most devoted, ardent, and despairing passion found their way to the victim's chamber, under her very pillow—read by stealth, and at night, they did their work well.

At last, moved by his representations that he could see her in no other way, without betraying his passion to others—and by his threats of self-destruction if she refused to comply with his entreaty—Hesther consented to give Verbane a secret meeting in the plantation at night. His passion was real enough now; he exerted all his eloquence in pleading it, and extorted a confession that it was not unreturned. From that time she was made to feel that she was in his power. He bound her to secrecy

by the most solemn oath; and no subsequent prayers of hers, to be allowed to throw herself at her betrothed's feet and confess all, availed to win her release. He gave her little time for reflection; they met constantly—always secretly now. He kept her passions awake, her conscience asleep, and worked alike upon her fear and love, till the very eve of the time fixed for her marriage with Mr. Ireton.

The bridegroom, loaded with gifts—and wearing in his heart the jewel of a deep and tender, though undemonstrative, love—came to fetch home his bride. The very night before the wedding-day the favoured lover decoyed the bride away. At midnight she stole from the house to meet him, and by morning she was scores of miles from the village church which was being adorned for her bridal—scores of

miles from the one true heart which alone loved her.

"It is her treachery that maddens me," Mr. Ireton said, in a letter to Hesther's aunt, written some days after the elopement. "I hate myself for the veriest of fools, when I think of the soft nonsense I talked to her that last night—of the rapture I felt when I kissed her cheek —of the timidity with which I pressed my lips upon it, where his have been pressed a hundred times—the first woman's cheek I have kissed since I was a boy. Her cheek was hot—ay, and it was guilt, not, as I thought, modesty, that made it burn. Well, she has chosen a miserable lot. I find he is more a villain than I thought at first. I am robbed and cheated to an extent that will be my ruin, and that of others with me. It was not mere malice that dictated the time of the elope-

ment. In my absence everything was in his hands. He has shown a calculating scoundrelism which is positively devilish. My curse will be, that I shall never be able to forgive. If he had but spared my honest name—but his forgeries have blackened that for ever."

Too noble to seek a revenge that must strike the woman whom he had loved, he was not noble enough to forgive; and this proved indeed the curse of his life.

In his first despair he let ruin come and met it stoically; afterwards, the dreary aim of his life was to retrieve, to more than retrieve, his position, and to make reparation to those who had been involved with him.

Hesther lived abroad with her husband for a few years, till he had spent her whole fortune, had dragged her through various depths of misery and degradation, and was

tired of her. A depraved husband will necessarily drag a woman downward — God only can see to what extent her descent is voluntary.

When all their money was spent, Verbane brought his wife to England; where he entered upon a fresh career of crime. His last exploit was to attempt the life of his former employer: he was convicted of the minor offence of house-breaking, and transported—but not for life.

From the newspapers Wilfred obtained full particulars of the trial and sentence; of the demeanour of "the wretched culprit," his father, and of his prosecutor.

It was when her boy, whom she had supported by the work of her hands, began to grow out of infancy, and her own health became feeble and uncertain, that a ghastly terror took possession of the mother — a terror lest her son should fall some day

into his father's hands—learn to tread in his father's footsteps—shamed by the bearing of a branded name—rebelling against her weak, worshipping, insufficient sway—or, by her death, left without even that poor shield. This terror, gaining complete possession of her shaken faculties, gradually led her up to the resolve of abandoning her idol to Mr. Ireton's guardianship. The course commended itself to her doubly—it was salvation to her boy, and reparation towards one whom she had wronged; for she did not dream but that her one jewel must be almost as precious in other eyes as in her own.

"When he said, 'I may hate the boy,' I did not believe that to be possible. I humbled myself at his feet, begging his promise to take my child into his house on my death, and never to let him hear of his father. He gave me the promise I

desired. A few days after I sent you to him, and left his neighbourhood. I ordered a small legacy that had been left me by my aunt, since my husband's transportation, to be paid to Mr. Ireton, to defray the expenses of your education. Of course he then believed that I was dead. I meant him to believe that I was dead."

The narrative went no further. Of all his mother's lonely years, after she had relinquished him, Wilfred learnt nothing. He mused and mused; by-and-by a slight noise made him lift his eyes from the fire and turn — in the doorway stood his mother, gazing at him.

Without a word he went to her and took her in his arms. Then he read her face over and over—finding this line of love and longing, this of sorrow and care, this of want and suffering, this of self-denial: one by one he kissed them, saying:—

"God reward you and requite you, mother—I never can, though I will try with all my life."

When she was seated by him, she said softly:—

"I was wrong, Wilfred—I know now that I was wrong—in giving you up. It was going against nature—making myself your Providence, instead of trusting in God. I should have known that as I pined for my child he would pine for his mother. We ought not to have parted."

"We ought not; but however much you were mistaken, your sacrifice was as great: the self-denying love that prompted it was gloriously strong! I am proud of my mother!"

"I did not know how his grief and the wrong that had been done him had soured him. I did not believe that he could keep his heart closed against you. Mistrusting

myself and my power to keep from you, I went abroad after I had given you up. I lived first as nurse, then as governess, in several German families: working my way up, I at last became English teacher in one of the best schools in Hanover, and afterwards obtained private pupils. It was while I taught at the school, many weary, dreary years after I had first gone abroad, that I became acquainted with Eleanour Narpenth. She took one of her capricious fancies to me—and this led to my being, long years afterwards, offered a situation as her companion. This offer I accepted because I believed there was a chance of hearing of your guardian at her father's house, and my hunger and thirst after news of you were becoming uncontrollable."

"Did you know me at once, mother, when we met at Thorndon?"

"I can hardly say that I did or that I did not. Ignorant of your position, even of the name your guardian had given you, I had paid no heed to anything that was said about 'Mr. Mason,' till I read some poems of yours: it seemed to me that they must be written by a man in such a position as that of my unknown son. Then when you called yourself *Wilfred* Mason irresistible conviction flashed upon me; the wildest of wild struggles began within me. How many times and how desperately I longed to have you in my arms, if only for a moment!—how many times I longed to push all others from you, to claim you as mine, and only mine!"

"Oh, mother! if you had but done so!"

"Your father's sentence had expired, Wilfred, and I did not know that he was dead! Do you wonder that, expecting his

return, I strove to be silent longer?—I saw that you were sensitive—was it likely that, if I could help it, I should let you be haunted by such dread as haunted me? The more I gloried in having such a son, the more I felt that I must not claim him, while——"

Here the trembling voice utterly broke down; but only for a few moments—the poor woman was soon calm again.

"The time when I tried to stand between you and Eleanour Narpenth, and brought your indignation upon me, Wilfred, was the bitterest time of all my life," she said. "Then I felt how foolishly wise I had been—felt that all your temptations came to you through me—felt paralyzed of all power to help you—that time was like a bad dream."

"God grant that my life may be one

long effort to make you happy!" said her son, as he kissed her.

"There is no need of any effort—my heart is brimful of the clearest and purest joy. The mere possession of your love, and the knowledge of how sweet, and good, and noble you are, is enough. Even if, for your happiness, I should some day be called upon to give you up—in your happiness I should still be happy."

"Praise me, mother—call me noble, strong, heroic, all that I am not! God willing, I will grow towards the standard of your belief. I feel weak and ignorant as a little child: with God's blessing, the strength of true manliness may grow from this child-like weakness."

CHAPTER VII.

"And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest;
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast."

WILFRED and his mother, sitting at their breakfast-table, merrily discussed ways and means of living. Wilfred had nothing, and his mother had but little; yet neither of them seemed the least dismayed at their position.

Mrs. Smith—for whom her late master had comfortably provided—had arrived at Tyngelt the night before, meaning to re-

side there for the future. She brought with her news from the outer world which might not otherwise have reached the Verbanes. Mr. Ireton, dying a wealthy man, had left the bulk of his property to Mrs. Southern, in reparation of losses her late husband had sustained through him. But an appeal had been made against this will by the heir-at-law, and there was a slight doubt whether some legal flaw might not prevent its being carried into execution.

Returning to their first topic, after having commented upon Mrs. Smith's news, Wilfred said:—

"The question is, how shall we manage to remain at Tyngelt? I know that you love the place."

"Yes I do love it!—but that is no reason why you should bury yourself here, so completely out of the world—for I

shall love any place where we may live together."

"From what I have seen, and from what you have told me of the place, I should say there is plenty of work to be done here. This thickly-populated mining district appears to be a virgin field, ripe for harvest and calling earnestly for labourers. What I want to discover is some way of bread-winning that will allow of our remaining at Tyngelt. You look surprised, mother; but I have made a twofold resolution—never to expose you to the vicissitudes of dependence upon my literary work for bread, or myself to the temptation of knowing you to be dependent upon it. What I want is some regular way of earning what people call 'a modest and independent maintenance.'"

"We can live here very cheaply—the price of everything is so moderate."

"Still we cannot live upon nothing."

"I am a very clever person, Wilfred. I can turn my hand to most things. In the great house—Tyngelt Place, where the Tregarthers live—I might meet with employment of some kind, if—"

"Thank you, mother, that is the very thing."

"You will let me try, then? You will not insist upon my being a dead weight on your hands?"

"What are you talking about, mother, dear? I beg your pardon, but I was thinking of this."

As he spoke he pointed to an advertisement in the county-paper which lay on the table between them.

"An advertisement for a Secretary—that would not suit me," his mother said, in a disappointed tone.

"But it may suit me. I am far too

selfish to be thinking of you. I mean to have all the pleasure of work to myself. Tregarther! I thought I knew the name—young Tregarther—he was drowned on the south coast a few years since—was a friend of poor Herbert Southern's. It is curious that you should have settled in their neighbourhood."

"Not curious; for it was not chance—not even what people call chance, Wilfred. I felt sure that Mr. Ireton must be known here; I felt sure that I could get tidings of him from the foreman of the works here: and so there still seemed a link between you and me while I lived in this place."

"Do you know anything about Tregarther? Have you heard him spoken of since you have been here?"

"He is in Parliament—people say he is both liberal and ambitious, but not

clever. He married a lady of title, who I should think is clever and ambitious and not liberal. I hear that he is philanthropic —desirous of establishing schools, and of building a lecture-hall—but not energetic. I should think that what he wants is some one to do all the work, while he has all the praise."

"I fancy the secretaryship may suit me, and that I may suit the secretaryship. How far off is Tyngelt Place?"

"Nearly three miles across the moor, and nearly five by the carriage-road. I do not think the situation is good enough for you, my son. In introducing yourself, Wilfred, shall you make use of your old name, as well as of your real one?"

"I do not wish to bridge over the space between my past and present life more than I can help. I think I may venture to refer Mr. Tregarther to Mr.

Narpenth for such information about me as he may desire. By-the-by, mother, has any news of—of the Narpenths reached you lately?"

Mrs. Verbane's face clouded over; seeing which, Wilfred's assumed an anxious, troubled expression.

"Do not hesitate to tell me anything you may have heard—I had rather know anything you know about Eleanour."

"She is going to be married—to an artist, of the name of Edler—a German."

"Going to marry Edler!—he is a noble-looking fellow! I hope she will not make him unhappy; but it seems so very sudden—one cannot help fearing that she is acting recklessly."

"They are old friends—this Mr. Edler taught drawing at the Hanover school where I was English teacher. He became attached to Miss Narpenth, and received

considerable encouragement from her. When she returned to England—this I heard from Miss Narpenth herself—he followed her, and obtained pupils in London, she being one of them. He was of good family and good character; and when he became sure that his love was returned, he asked her father's sanction to an engagement between them. His own prospects being fair, I think that if Captain Narpenth had not interfered, the young people would have had it all their own way. But Captain Narpenth had other views for his sister; he worked upon his father, and made him refuse his consent; and for this, and the ridicule he poured upon her, Miss Narpenth never forgave him. Her love grew stronger for being thwarted. I think that she herself proposed an elopement. Her maid found this out, and betrayed her mistress to Captain Narpenth.

I do not know exactly what followed; but after having gone so far that she ought, I think, to have sacrificed all for her lover—to have married him and shared his poverty—for she had then no control over her own fortune, she proved herself as weak as she had been impulsive, and gave him up. He, it seems, never gave her up.

"I hope Eleanour's love for so constant a lover will be such as he deserves. To be sure that she is happy would be a great relief to me; freeing me not from self-reproach—from that I can never escape—but from remorse for the consequences of criminal weakness."

"I cannot see the criminality of your conduct, Wilfred. Miss Narpenth did not strive to hide the fact that she loved you. She is beautiful and fascinating; for you she was also gentle and amiable. It was natural that you should allow yourself to

believe that you loved her. I do not think that one man out of a hundred would have acted differently."

Wilfred paused before he answered; full confession trembled on his lips, but not even to his mother could he yet speak calmly of Felicia.

"You forget, mother," he said by-and-by, "that I firmly believed that while I was ignorant of my name and birth I had no right to marry. In seeking Eleanour's society, and in other ways, I exposed myself to temptations which I was too feeble to overcome. I selfishly sought my own pleasure, shutting the eyes of my conscience to the possible consequences for her. Surely nothing can be less manly than for a man—for the mere pleasure, luxury and excitement of his senses—to allow himself to become the object of a woman's passionate attachment or of her

reverent affection, without trying himself to ascertain whether he is love-worthy, capable of loving her again for herself alone—free to love her again, only and solely, as she loves him." He could not help thinking of Felicia as well as of Eleanour as he spoke.

"Do you think she loved you for yourself alone?—you only and solely? She would never have loved you, if she had known you first as her father's clerk. Even while she loved you, she sometimes let her fancy amuse itself with the love another man bore her."

"It seems to me, dear mother, that you, like all other women I have known, judge men too leniently, and women too sternly. Don't you think that, for one girl who plays with a man's heart and endangers his happiness, there are a hundred unmanly men who study to make themselves beloved, or allow themselves to become

so, without any thought or care about repaying the love they win?"

"It may be so; but the fault is blacker in the woman than in the man. I cannot reason upon what I mean; yet I feel that I am right when I say that one woman who invites, or self-indulgently permits, love which she cannot return to be poured out at her feet, does more evil, both to other women and to men, than do the hundred men-triflers acting in the same way. It sounds cruel to say it; but I think it is true that it does a true woman no moral and spiritual harm to suffer; that when a woman 'goes wrong' after a disappointment, it is fair to believe that under no circumstances would she have led a beautiful life. Women are born more patient than men; to suffer patiently is no great merit in them, and is the discipline of their lives: both love and suffering—suffering through

love, or suffering loss of love—are needful for the full awakenment of a woman's nature. I suppose you think that it sounds cruel to say that it does women no harm to suffer; it is not a doctrine that it would be safe to preach to most men; but I think that most true women will feel that it is a true doctrine. I did not mean to make a long harangue, Wilfred; I only wanted to defend myself from your accusation of sternness. Of the harm done by deceit and faithlessness in a woman I know only too much, knowing how the whole nature of a good man was hardened and embittered by my treachery. The woman he loves should be for a man a revelation of something higher than he finds elsewhere in this world, opening to him something of heaven; when, instead, his glimpses into her nature are more like glimpses of hell—when he finds his love made sport of, and his faith abused

—who shall calculate the amount to which he is injured——"

"Say no more on the subject, dearest mother. It is natural that you should feel as you do; no doubt it is a dim consciousness of the truth of what you say that makes women often, as we think, hard in their judgments of each other. Still I cannot help believing that sin, being sin, in either man or woman, is judged as such in both, and in the one case acts and reacts as infinitely as in the other. If my conduct towards Eleanour has driven her into the arms of another from recklessness rather than from love—and if, when it is too late, he feels this and resents it—who shall say where that misery which I have set going will stop; but I trust in God such is not the case—I trust that the old love may prove itself to have been the real love."

As Wilfred, rising to leave the house,

having kissed his mother, stood gazing at her for a few moments, he thought how beautiful she was now, with the spiritual beauty of peaceful joy after long-suffering.

"What time shall you be home, my son?"

"Not till dinner-time. I am going to try my fortune at Tyngelt Place."

Wilfred's progress across the moor was but slow. This morning all nature seemed clothed in intensely-significant beauty. He thought much and tenderly of Eleanour Narpenth; and he prayed earnestly for her happiness—feeling almost overpowered by gratitude for the serenity and peace that had fallen upon his own life.

He had to rouse himself from his musing mood when he found himself at the great bronze gates of Tyngelt Place.

The present house, a long, low, range of building, stood on the site of the ancient mansion; the avenue of magnificent old limes

which led up to it in a semicircular sweep seemed out of harmony with the white newness of the rather ugly structure.

Wilfred was ushered into a library, opening, as did all the long range of windows at the west side of the house, upon a piazza, from which an expanse of smoothest lawn sloped down to a stream. Beyond the stream were a few groups of forest-trees; between them you saw the half-encircling belt of limes. Growing on much lower ground than that on which the house was built, the trees allowed glimpses of flashing blue sea to be discerned above their piny, browning crests.

Wilfred had sent in a card, with the name of Wilfred Verbane written upon it. After some delay, Mr. Tregarther came into the room, holding this card and an open letter in his hand. Only a few preliminary remarks were exchanged before he put the letter into Wilfred's hand, asking,

"Do you know anything of the writer?"

Glancing at once at the signature, Wilfred answered—

"Yes."

"Pray read the note itself; I received it only a few days before I heard of the writer's death."

The note was simply this:—

"I have just heard that a woman, whose real name is Hesther Verbane (born Grey), but who may now pass by some other—in which case let her real name remain known only to you—a woman whom, till to-day, I believed to have died upwards of five-and-twenty years ago, is now living near the village of Tyngelt. If you can in any way serve her—or her son, should he be living with her—you will oblige,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOHN MASTERS IRETON."

The date of the note was that of the day before the writer's death; the clause "or her son, should he be living with her," inserted above the line, was evidently an after-thought.

Mr. Tregarther had turned away to the window: there was a considerable pause before Wilfred spoke.

"Hesther Verbane is my mother," he said; and said nothing more.

Mr. Tregarther took no further notice of the letter; but, trying to draw Wilfred out, began to speak on political subjects, touching upon most of the social topics of the day.

The interest Wilfred had in these matters was a new interest, born of new views of life and new hopes of usefulness—consequently it was a warm interest, touched with enthusiasm. As far as Mr. Tregarther could enter into Wilfred's meaning, his

ideas seemed to him to coincide with his own; or to be an idealization of his plainer, more practical notions. As Wilfred kindled, his manner and whole bearing exercised a sort of fascination over the great man, who—borne along by the eloquence of his language, while he was flattered by the deference and gentleness, captivated by the originality and independence of his address, and impressed by its grace and refinement—found himself, in the pleasure of conversation with one who not only apprehended his ideas, but, as it were, interpreted him to himself, forgetting the business which had brought him this pleasure.

At the first pause in the flow of talk Wilfred rose: then, before he had time to return to the subject of the secretaryship, Mr. Tregarther said, with something apologetic in his hurried manner:—

"How soon may I avail myself of your services should the proposal I make you—which I had better make in writing, instead of detaining you now—be satisfactory to you? I am overwhelmed with business, and am anxious to set on foot some of the schemes to which I have alluded."

"I am quite at liberty at present—next week."

"That would do charmingly."

"But—as to references, you will require——"

"This letter, and, excuse my freedom, your own appearance, amply suffice."

"May I beg to be allowed to keep this letter? Circumstances render it particularly valuable to me."

"Certainly, pray do so."

The great man himself ushered Wilfred into the hall, and there cordially shook hands with him; rather to the disgust of

his Lady who crossed it at the time.

Returning to his library, he rubbed his hands together softly, and soliloquized in a self-congratulatory manner—

"A most superior man; I must try hard to secure him and to keep him—wonderful that he should think of burying himself at Tyngelt. Something rather mysterious about his history, perhaps."

Wilfred met his mother near the cottage; she was coming to meet him, anxious to know the result of his application. Questioning his face, she found something strange shining in his eyes. With a few words of explanation, he put the note into her hands.

"Forgiven!" she breathed out, and a great joy irradiated her face. Then she pulled her veil over it, leant on her son's arm, and they walked home in perfect silence.

To herself, through that day and aloud at night, she many times repeated that word—"forgiven." This joy was no selfish joy—it was as much that he forgave, as that she was forgiven, that she rejoiced and felt that the crowning crown had fallen upon her happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ein guter Abend kommt heran,
Wenn ich den ganzen Tag gethan."

Five years had past since Mrs. Verbane had brought her son to Tyngelt. Summer was in its full glory still. Each succeeding month and year had made Mr. Tregarther more aware of the value of his secretary, and had increased his direct and indirect dependance upon him. Even Lady Tregarther was forced to acknowledge to herself that her husband owed a great deal to "that talented and indefatigable person, Mr. Verbane." At the same time,

she considered Wilfred's influence to be somewhat dangerous. Mr. Tregarther was now and then carried away by the enthusiasm of his secretary, hurried along a good road faster and further than he had entertained any intention of travelling — much further and faster than his Lady considered it desirable that he should travel. She feared, too, that his liberalism was inclined to become rampant—that his views were slightly tinged with quixotism. Her tory friends hinted at a tendency towards radicalism and republicanism, and these two words were terrible to the ears of Lady Tregarther. It also appeared to the practical and prudent lady that Wilfred's hand was always in her husband's purse : lavish of his own time and thought, he did not let false delicacy prevent his making large and frequent claims upon his employer's wealth.

The town of Tyngelt—which was about

equally distant from Seafern Cottage and from Tyngelt Place, and lay further inland than either of them—now boasted of a building—of its kind the largest and handsomest in the county—erected and endowed by Mr. Tregarther, and devoted to educational purposes — principally to the education of adults. Very shortly—upon Mr. Tregarther's return from a brief sojourn abroad, which his Lady had thought requisite for his health —this building was to be publicly opened. The good work that was to be carried on in it had long since been unostentatiously commenced by Wilfred and his mother. Having hired the two largest and most commodious rooms to be had in the town, they had converted one into a reading and class-room, where Wilfred had attended twice a-day—reading the papers to such of the miners as could not read and chose to frequent this room — teaching reading

and writing to such as wished to be taught, and delivering simple and elementary lectures on various subjects likely to interest his hearers. In the other room Mrs. Verbane had pursued a somewhat similar course with girls and women.

It was the success of this modest attempt, testified to by the crowded state of the rooms, that had stimulated Wilfred to urge Mr. Tregarther on to the execution of a scheme which he had vaguely entertained for years—even before he knew Wilfred he had gone so far as to employ an architect to draw plans for the Tyngelt Mechanics' Institute. So far, but no further. Now the Tyngelt Mechanics' Institute—with its lecture-hall, reading, coffee, and class rooms, well-built, well-planned, and well-arranged—was a substantial reality, likely to become the pride of Mr. Tregarther's heart, as it was already the joy of

Wilfred's and of his mother's — to whose exertions it was mainly owing that the place and the people were ripe to reap the advantages it offered them.

For a considerable portion of every year Wilfred's daily attendance at Tyngelt Place had not been a necessity. During such holiday times he had devoted himself more to his mother, to his work among the people, and to his literary work.

About this time he had in the press a volume of Essays—chiefly upon such questions as the relation of class to class, and the duties of the employer to the employed — so thoughtful, so practical, so high-toned, and yet so simple of apprehension, that when they appeared their recognition was general and enthusiastic. The writing of them had been a labour of love to Wilfred — their subjects were such as formed his keenest interests now, and he

wrote with knowledge of both sides of the truths of which he treated. Knowledge gained by his intercourse with Mr. Tregarther, and by those frequent expeditions which he and his mother made into the neighbourhood—the object of which was to seek new pupils, or to endeavour to relieve some case of misery and destitution of which they had been told.

Both gifted with that unconscious tact which exists as an instinct in some delicately-organized natures, they succeeded in coming heart to heart with those among whom they went—in penetrating into the very depths of their needs—into the secrets of their crimes and of their virtues. Often they returned from their expeditions, not only physically weary, but with spirits depressed to something like despair. The field of labour was so wide, the labourers were so few, and the ill weeds which choked

the grain were so deep-rooted. At such times each cheered the other, till both were cheered. There were bright things shining here and there in the awful darkness—jewels flashed forth from dunghills, and pearls lying among swine were trampled on and not destroyed.

Sitting by his mother among her roses, after one of their longest and weariest days, Wilfred said:—

"The more crime and misery I see, the better, on the whole, do I think of human nature. Perhaps, though, I ought hardly to say of *human* nature—it is the divinity in man that asserts itself so nobly here and there, shining with such pure lustre through so thick a night. Putting oneself, in imagination, into the position of some of the most wretched creatures we have seen to-day — thinking of the evil influences that have surrounded them from the

dawn of reason—of the foulness of the atmosphere they have inhaled as native air—is not the natural feeling one of wonder that they are no worse; and of awful recognition of that dignity in man which survives such degrading humiliations, and such polluting associations?"

"I think so—quite. A few times I have seen the death of women as wicked and as miserable as any in this district—I dare call them positively miserable, but the worst of them I would not dare call positively wicked. Trying to imagine what of them would remain when all that was of the earth had perished, I have been wonderfully comforted. Thinking of them as removed from a foul atmosphere, raised above the temptations consequent upon misery, I could believe—judging by passing flashes that revealed a core of truth and love in their hearts—

that in a pure and beautiful atmosphere they would have led lives at least as pure and beautiful as those of many women, to think of whom in the same category with them seems at first monstrous. After all, therefore, the change from the sinful woman to a creature, like-minded with a little child, who may hope to enter into the kingdom of heaven, is not so much, it seems to me, a transformation, as the falling off of outer husks to leave a wholesome kernel free."

Exchanging thoughts and experiences thus, enjoying the cool air from the sea, and the fragrance from the garden, after the heat and toil of the day—who can doubt that Wilfred and his mother were happy?

Wilfred had once said—

"I half suspect that a man is not worthy the love of a true and beautiful-

natured woman, till, being sure of her happiness, he can be happy without her love."

This was an article in his creed now.

At the same time with those practical essays, a volume of poems, all written during his five years' residence at Tyngelt, was to appear. He was conscious that these poems—the fruits of a nature to which moral activity and practical Christianity had given new bones and sinews, and which were the expressions of its clearest recognitions of highest truths, its deepest feelings of purest human love, and its most intense and worshipful convictions of divine goodness—were not to be classed with those earlier productions which had been the mere expressions of the morbid self-consciousnesses of a poetic nature. He knew also, and by experience, that there was not, as might at first

appear, anything inconsistent in the energies of one man being practically occupied by the most homely and real needs and interests of humanity, and by the contemplation of its most exalted and ideal wants and possibilities. The deepest depths of human feeling stirred, by witnessing the crimes and miseries of men, he felt that he must be overpowered by emotions of sorrow and despair, or must turn with intensified worship of recognition to the contemplation of the grandeur of nature, and the goodness of God.

Profoundest pity for his suffering fellows—earnest desire to serve them, and loving sympathy with them—minute appreciation of the varying shades of natural beauty, and high faith in its God-given power over the souls of men—spoke from all Wilfred Verbane wrote at this time: but more strongly, subtlely, beautifully, from his poetry than from his prose.

CHAPTER IX.

'Saying, 'tis good enough for these,
My fellows—it will pass and please—
How arrogant are they who sit at ease!"

"VERY glad to see you again, Mr. Verbane. And how have things been progressing in my absence?" was Mr. Tregarther's greeting as he entered his secretary's room on the first morning after his return.

"Well, the Institute is quite free from workmen."

"That is right. I have asked a few friends down to be present at the open-

ing, and I should like the first of August to be the day. How about your lectures?"

"I have worked at them industriously —they will be ready in time, I hope."

"But are not yet completed! Excuse my saying so, but I am afraid they will be too learnedly-elaborate. Had I fancied they would cost you so much labour, I should have hesitated about asking you to give them. I thought you could easily dash off something slight, sketchy, and suggestive; and I knew that, the men being accustomed to your voice and manner, it would be a great thing gained if you, rather than any stranger, gave the first lectures of the course."

"I think that on consideration you must agree with me in thinking that one must be complete master of a subject in order to be able to treat it slightly, sketchily, and, at

the same time, suggestively; also, that such a style of treatment is only adapted for an audience who are already in a position to fill up the outlines of one's sketch and to follow out its suggestions—consequently only adapted for an audience who are almost as much masters of the subject as is the speaker. It seems to me," pursued Wilfred, with the peculiarly gentle smile and the persuasive voice with which he often tore to shreds Mr. Tregarther's commonplaces or laid bare his want of logic, "that the nature of my audience—which, at first sight, would appear to make careful elaboration a waste of time—in reality demands it. I am therefore laboriously endeavouring to carry my hearers with me step by step—to make all my assertions self-evident—to divest my style of any idiosyncrasy—to be sharp clear, and concise, so that no peculiarity or ambiguity

of mine may distract and embarrass those who listen to me. I am endeavouring, too, by leaning more on biography than on history, to clothe dry bones of dates and facts in human flesh and blood, and so to infuse a human interest into my subject."

"I am only concerned that you should give yourself so much trouble, and expend so much original thought."

"I believe I must work in my own way—interest myself before I can hope to interest others. Besides, don't you think that, in all work, one must be true to one's utmost capabilities in that direction?—that a man has no right to offer less than his best to his fellows? If I were to stand before those eager, hard-working seekers after knowledge with a carelessly-prepared and ill-digested lecture, I think I should be guilty of sin against them, against myself, and against God. It seems

to me that, in order to meet their honest ignorance as it ought to be met, I must stretch to the utmost all my own power and knowledge."

"You know best, doubtless; but I should have thought that it was easy to be easy—that what was easy to write would be easy to understand—that one might treat the ignorant and uneducated as one would treat children. My notions, I suppose, are plain and practical, while yours are rather poetical and metaphysical."

"I think, Mr. Tregarther," Wilfred answered, laughingly, "that I am the more practical of the two for once. 'There is nothing so difficult as simplicity,' the French lady said, and this you would feel if you had to teach young children or ignorant men. To be superficial and general is easy enough, as everybody knows; to be simple and comprehensive, to begin at the beginning of

any subject, is harder than any one who has not made the effort would believe."

"Yet books for children and tracts for the poor are generally written by persons of inferior intellect and ability—by women and comparatively uneducated men. How seldom the first writers of the day attempt any thing of the kind."

"That is very true: only—and this exception of mine touches on one of our old subjects of dispute—I would not include women in this sweeping classification of incapability, because they often work better from instinct than men do from knowledge. Perhaps its being true accounts for the disheartening character of this class of literature, which is mostly produced by persons too superficial to distinguish between superficiality and simplicity—not enlightened enough to comprehend the difficulty and dignity of what they undertake. Those more fitted for

the work are apt to recognize and shrink from its difficulties. Very few men are wise enough, good enough, or humble enough to write for children and for the uneducated. I do not feel that I am —and therefore, attempting to instruct and interest the latter, I feel bound to do my very utmost; if I fail, it shall be for want of power, not for want of will."

"Your views are rather at variance with received notions: they have something in them, no doubt; but do you not push them to an extreme? Especially as regards these lectures to be delivered to an audience of miners, which you are elaborating as if your audience were to include the great and learned of the earth."

"I am sure that if you consider the case of these men—the sacrifices they make, and the obstacles they have to

contend with in their pursuit of knowledge—your good heart will lead you to acknowledge that what they have a right to is—our very best, presented to them in the very best way. If, standing before them, I offered them any less than this, I should feel humiliated in their eyes and in my own."

"You drive me into a corner, and force me to confess that there is some selfishness at the bottom of my concern that you should bestow so much time and labour upon these lectures. I want you for many things just now, and wished to propose that you should, for the present, give me more of your time."

"If it is really necessary, I can do so; but I have been thinking that I should like to take young Hind into my employ, as a sort of secretary's secretary."

"That young scapegrace!"

"The less said about his past life the better, I believe. At the same time, I have a strong feeling that he has valuable qualities, and may yet make a worthy man. If I employ him, I shall let him understand that I make myself responsible to you for his conduct."

"He is a clever fellow, I know; but weak of principle—always ready to be led away. He is continually getting into trouble—exposing himself to temptations, which he is not strong enough to resist."

"As do so many of us," said the secretary, with his twilight smile. He added—

"My plan, if you approve it, is to keep him working at our cottage; where he can be constantly under my mother's surveillance, or my own. I have, as you know unlimited faith in my mother's influence for good; she will endeavour to give the

young man tastes that will raise him above such temptations as those to which he has generally fallen a victim, and to strengthen feelings and principles that will raise him above yet higher temptations."

"I have nothing to say against your employing Hind; see that he does not take you in, that is all: for the rest, use your own judgment. By-the-by, can you spare Lady Tregarther a few moments? She wants to consult you about some of her arrangements for the first of August."

"Be so good as to make my excuses for to-day. It is already late—my mother will be waiting dinner."

Wilfred never encountered Lady Tregarther when he could avoid her. She was one of those women from whom such men as Wilfred must always instinctively shrink. She had substantial good qualities, perhaps—so her friends said—but her character was

hard and unfeminine, and her manner destitute of all redeeming charm. When she wished to please, she could be neither gracious nor graceful; and when, desiring to mark her consciousness of the difference between her position and that of the person whom she addressed, she meant to be merely frigid and formal, she was often rude and insulting. Priding herself on her candour, she seemed ignorant that what she regarded as candour was often mere discourtesy and brusquerie: utterly wanting in the instinctive tact of a refined nature, and despising the conventional polish of society, which might have disguised this want, she constantly wounded the feelings of those with whom she came in contact, and had no sweetness or generosity by which to heal the wounds she made.

To-day, however, Wilfred was doomed to sustain an encounter with this dreaded lady:

his retreat was cut off, and he was entrapped into Lady Tregarther's morning room. Though he refused to sit down, and pleaded, half-laughingly, half-pathetically, his hunger, and his mother's anxiety, he was obliged to listen to a list of the guests who were expected at the Place, and to give his opinion upon matters connected with the arrangements for the fête, and the amusements for the succeeding days.

When, at last, Wilfred reached Seafern Cottage, his mother, who stood at the garden gate, watching for him, immediately detected an expression of pain or of annoyance, on his face.

"The heat tires you, my son!" she said, as Wilfred dismounted from his horse—which was a recent present from Mr. Tregarther—and threw the reins to his small groom.

"A little, mother; and you," he added,

brightening, "nothing tires you—you grow younger and more beautiful every day."

"Flatterer!"

"This evening light is the only flatterer—slanting on your cheek, it shows how smooth and clear it is. I am sure I look too old to be your son!"

That was really the case. At this time strangers often imagined the relation between them to be that of husband and wife. She was but nineteen years older than her son; her hair was no greyer than his; her face had gained a smooth roundness of outline, while his had a wasted look—as if the constant toil that kept his spirit so healthily and serenely quiet, tasked his body over-much. His temples, from which the hair had receded, appeared thought-worn—worn (or so any woman who loved him would have believed) by thoughts so high and noble, by cares so unselfish

and pure, that any other woman loving him must have longed to share his mother's privilege of pressing tender lips upon those worn temples—of lavishing tender cares on all his life.

Mrs. Verbane led her son into the tiny room, which all day she had sedulously kept dim and cool, and to the table on which a cold dinner, temptingly-arranged, had been waiting for more than an hour.

After dinner, when the sun had set and the evening-breeze had risen, the mother and son strolled slowly to and fro upon the velvet turf at the cliff's edge.

"Tyngelt Place is to be very gay this autumn," Wilfred said; "I shall have a good deal to endure there from Lady Tregarther. She wants me to arrange archery-fêtes, and wants my advice about all sorts of things completely out of my line. I shall be obliged to resort to cunning to

get clear of the house every evening—she is quite unscrupulous."

"You promised me a holiday-tour this year—why should not we go away at the gay time, and so escape from all the bustle?"

"It would be pleasant, but it is simply impossible, dearest mother. We must stay and endure."

"I remember—the lectures and the opening of the Institute. Of course you could not leave. I should not wish you to leave. I shall be so proud of you!"

"Poor mother!"

"Not poor in anything. Why do you say 'poor mother'?"

"Because your son is so different from anything you think him!"

By-and-by Mrs. Verbane went indoors. Then Wilfred, all weary to-night—heart, brain, and body—threw himself down on the

turf, "in half disgust of love, life, all things," and gave himself up to long-banished tormentors. A few words of Lady Tregarther's had raised the unwelcome legion.

Perhaps he passed half-an-hour in unprofitable repining and self-tormenting; then, suddenly, he sprang erect, crying—"No more of this!" and went home. A cup of tea taken, and half-an-hour spent with his mother, he went off to his night-class. He threw himself into his work even more completely than usual, and even more completely than usual he fettered the attention of his rough and grimy scholars. One or two of the more tender and sympathetic-natured among his pupils noticed his haggard looks—all felt the warmth and earnestness of his manner.

By this time there were many men in Tyngelt and in the district round it who, but for shame, would have liked to press to

their lips the pale hand that was always busy for their good; many women, too, who remembered Wilfred nightly in their prayers, as the deliverer of sons or husbands from a slavery worse than death.

Wilfred kept his friends longer than usual to-night, and dismissed them with a heartier hand-shake. When—having put out the lights and locked up the place, ascended the steep street and gained the open moor—he was at last again alone; he felt that the legion had been put to flight, that he had regained the mastery of himself, that he was free again—free to serve God, through his fellow-men, with the service of a free man.

CHAPTER X.

> "Twilight hath spirits passing pure and fair:
> But now there flitted by—as through the room
> Gather'd a summer-night's soft restful gloom—
> A radiant form with radiant-gleaming hair."

On the day before that important first of August which he secretly dreaded, as a day that would strip something of its silence—as he feared, too, something also of its sanctity—from his work, Wilfred was forced to remain very late at Tyngelt Place.

The luxuriant summer growth of the creepers climbing up the pillars of the Piazza darkened the room, so that it had

already become dim, while the daylight outside had hardly begun to fade into twilight. Hoping to finish his work before it should be necessary to have the lamp kindled, Wilfred wrote on eagerly. Close application and the heat of the day had rather fevered him; yet when the evening wind rose and rustled among his papers, telling of tempting coolness on the moor and on the shore, he merely glanced up and out hurriedly, then bent again over his work. This glance, and the breath of the wind, assured him that all was subdued and fragrant beauty without; it showed him, between the crests of the limes, a strip of deep-hued water, and above them a sea of greenish-gold clear light, in which floated islands of amber and crimson. Postponing his enjoyment of all this beauty till his homeward ride, Wilfred worked on. He had just finished,

and could no longer see, when a slight rustling at the window attracted his attention. A lady, dressed in a pearly-coloured glistening silk which seemed to catch and imprison the last light of evening, stepped in to the room—then paused, and turned from the darkness within to gaze down the darkening lawn.

All the windows of the west wing opening on the Piazza, this lady—one of Lady Tregarther's numerous and lately-arrived guests—had, of course, made a mistake among them. To warn her of her mistake and of his presence, Wilfred rustled his papers more than was needful as he put them away. At the noise, she turned: there was just light enough to enable her to discover that this was not the room in which she had expected to find herself; and that a gentleman was, or had been, writing at a table in its centre.

"I fear I have disturbed Mr. Tregarther in his library," she said. "I have made a mistake among so many windows. Where shall I find myself if I go through this room?"

"This door opens into a passage which leads into the corridor. If you will allow me, I will conduct you to the drawing-room." Wilfred's voice was unsteady as he spoke, and therefore had not its natural tone.

He opened the door. The lady passed out of it, and he followed her. The passage was lighter than the library had been. Accepting his offer of escort, the lady glanced at Wilfred: then it seemed as if the uncertain light made her afraid to advance, for she suddenly paused.

"Will you take my arm? The servants should have lighted the lamps before this. You may trust me as a safe guide, for I

am familiar with the house." His voice was more unsteady, and still less like his usual voice now: perhaps, too, there was something cold and restraining in its constrained tone.

Her hand resting lightly on his sleeve, the lady glided along the dim passages at Wilfred's side. There was no further interchange of words.

They reached the drawing-room door; Wilfred opened it and bowed; taking her hand from his arm, the lady, too, bowed, but without lifting her eyes to his face. At that moment a servant passed with a taper, and its light fell on them both; it made no difference—he did not need that light, and she had not looked at him again. She passed into the room, and he returned to his dark retreat.

Of mature age and grey-headed as he was, this encounter agitated Wilfred as no-

thing had agitated him for long, long years. And yet, thanks to Lady Tregarther, he was not quite unprepared for the chance of such a meeting. She had enumerated Mrs. and Miss Southern in the list of her expected guests. Throwing himself into a chair, he bowed his head down upon his arms, pressing his forehead upon the sleeve on which Felicia's fingers had rested. What other follies he committed shall not be revealed.

Just as he had risen, and as he was groping about for his hat, Mr. Tregarther entered.

"In darkness!" he exclaimed, the light streaming in from the now kindled passage-lamp, showing him that Wilfred was not yet gone.

"I am just about to leave—I am already very late," Wilfred answered.

Then, as it occurred to him that Felicia, if she had not recognized him to-night

must certainly do so to-morrow, he said:—

"A lady, whom I believe to have been Miss Southern, of Beech Holmes, passed through the room just now. It was nearly dark, but I do not think I could have been mistaken in her."

"You know the Southerns, then?"

"The only son—he died some years ago—was a school-friend of mine. I have been a guest at Beech Holmes."

"Your name has been mentioned several times within the last day or two. Mrs. Southern takes an interest in you from what she has heard of the good you are doing in the neighbourhood; but she did not appear to remember the name."

"I was known to Mrs. Southern under a different name—that of Mason."

Having said just enough to shield Felicia from any unpleasant shock of surprise to-morrow, Wilfred passed to another

subject in so decided a manner, as to check any expression of surprise from Mr. Tregarther. The lamp had been lighted now, and Mr. Tregarther was burrowing among a heap of books which covered a side-table.

"Here it is!" he said, as he approached Wilfred with a small, plainly-bound volume in his hand. "I want you to read this book—my nephew Templar has been talking about it, he can't say enough in its praise; it seems that it treats of subjects in which you and I are especially interested. We may get some useful hints from it, I fancy. Will you take this copy home with you? I have a second."

Wilfred recognised the book as his own—it was the volume of his essays which had just been published.

"It was my intention to beg your

acceptance of a copy of this very book," he said. "I wrote it."

"You wrote these essays! Dear me! Allow me to congratulate you. My nephew, Templar, says that the book will make a great stir—be one of the successes of the day. I am half-offended that I hear of it, as yours, only in this casual way. Is this your first published work?"

"No—oh, no."

"Are you likely to take to literature as a profession? Am I likely to lose you? You see how selfish I am."

"I shall never again make literature my dependance as a bread-earning profession. I did so formerly, and found that to do so was, as far as I am concerned, a mistake. Really, I must wish you good-night; my mother will think I am lost."

"You will not forget that we depend on

you and your mother to join us to-morrow evening—after the lecture?"

"I believe that my mother has declined Lady Tregarther's invitation."

"We cannot hear of that—come you must, both of you. Templar will be more than ever desirous of an introduction to you; and I am sure Mrs. Southern will be disappointed if she sees nothing of you."

Wilfred muttered something barely intelligible—and, at last, escaped. Late as it was, he forgot to make haste; his horse picked its way at its own pace through the soft, warm darkness of the summer night.

"Mother, after all, we must join the dinner-party to-morrow," Wilfred said, in the course of the evening.

"Must we? You said that you should

be too tired—I believe the truth was that you thought I did not wish to go — I told Lady Tregarther that we should not go."

"What have you fit to wear? You know quite well that I am proud of you. I want you to look your best."

"I have the dress I wore the day we went with Miss Narpenth to the Opera—black velvet, and old lace that was my mother's."

"That will do beautifully."

"The make is old-fashioned."

"That is no matter — you will look lovely."

"I am afraid that to-morrow will weary you and try you dreadfully, my son."

"I shall survive it. I did not expect all this fuss and display. Still it is to be a general holiday, and will, I hope, be a happy day for hundreds. I think that you, mother, will have no sinecure — with the

monster tea-party to manage in the afternoon, my lecture to listen to, to dress for Tyngelt Place and dine there—all this after the ceremonial of the morning. Heigho! it will be a hard day's work!"

CHAPTER XI.

" A man of sensitive temperament, working for others in singleness of heart, has often more to endure from the way of the world's recognition of his work, than from its neglect of it."

THE great day was come—the day of the opening of the Tyngelt Mechanics' Institute.

From the platform erected at one end of the lecture-hall various great men of the neighbourhood addressed the hundreds assembled in the body of the room. The platform and the whole Hall were tastefully adorned—with gorse and heather from the moor, ferns from the lanes, evergreens from the Tyngelt Place shrubberies, cabbage-roses

and a profusion of other homely flowers from the cottage-gardens round. The Hall was lofty, well proportioned, spacious and airy; spotlessly fresh and simply decorated: the effect was good, even grand—especially to those who, from the elevation of the platform, commanded the whole sea of eager faces uplifted towards the speakers. Wilfred was one of these.

The two front rows of seats were occupied by Lady Tregarther's guests. Of these Wilfred only saw his own mother, her face pale from excitement; Felicia Southern, with a ray of subdued light slanting on her bright hair; a gentleman, who sat between her and her mother, and was devotedly attentive to them both; and that mother. The spot where they sat was the one spot towards which he tried not to look; yet their faces were the only faces that he saw from among those front ranks.

The part Wilfred had to play was the difficult one of acting as mouth-piece for the working men—returning thanks for them to Mr. Tregarther. This he rose to do towards the conclusion of the proceedings.

At first he spoke with painful effort. Felicia's face, at which he did not look, seemed to waver before his eyes and confuse him; but as he went on, he succeeded in concentrating his attention upon his subject—in keeping his bodily eye and his mind's eye upon those eager-faced miners—in identifying himself with them, and speaking right out from their hearts. The manner in which he expressed their gratitude was noble and simple; without a touch of sycophancy or servility. He dwelt upon the conviction entertained by the more thoughtful among them, that employers would never have cause to regret anything done to

elevate the mental condition of the employed—as the result of such efforts would always be, to win them higher service from higher motives. He believed, he said, that it was only when the working-man picked up half-knowledge and half-truth in spite of efforts made by his employer to keep him down and keep him back, that this distorted truth and imperfect knowledge puffed him up with arrogance, led him to take a defiant attitude, and to set himself hand-to-hand against his employer, whom he then regarded as his oppressor.

The posture Wilfred assumed for those for whom he spoke was at once dignified and appreciative — dignified in its recognition of their claims, and appreciative of the signal advantages now offered them.

While he spoke every eye was fixed on his calm, white face, and deep-set, shining eyes. Till he had finished, and had

disappeared among the other gentlemen who occupied the platform, scarcely a breath seemed to be drawn in the room; then there was a burst of such deafening applause as made fine ladies turn pale and red by turns.

This applause ceased suddenly: it was followed by a stir and hum in the back of the room—then by an expectant hush. A stalwart miner mounted upon a form, and his stentorian voice broke the silence.

He spoke right to Wilfred, who, gently pushed to the front of the platform by his companions, that the giant might have him in his sight, stood there motionless and colourless, leaning on the rail.

Just as he would have spoken to him had they two been alone, the miner now spoke to his schoolmaster; every word was expressive of heartfelt gratitude, and of an esteem amounting to veneration.

The words were few and strong; they were almost too many and too strong for Wilfred.

A second man rose up from among the crowd of workers, and addressing "Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen," made a brief statement of the nature and extent of the work that had been done during the last five years by Mr. Verbane and "the good lady, his mother."

The proceedings had taken an unexpected and most embarrassing turn. The flood-gates once opened, there was no knowing, as Lady Tregarther said, where this sort of thing would stop.

Wilfred's eyes, a gesture of his hand, a few words from him expressive of the painful humiliation of over-appreciation, his paleness, and the advice given by some woman in the crowd—

"Don't! he can't abear this public-like

talk—say the rest quiet to him another time."

This, and Wilfred's disappearance from the platform and from the room, brought the proceedings to a close.

The next thing in the order of the day's festivities was the clearance of the Hall, preparatory to the setting out of the tables for the monster dinner: this was done, and the good and substantial cheer brought in and arranged in a wonderfully short space of time.

As Mr. Tregarther's deputy, Wilfred had been obliged to promise to take the head of the long centre table, while the foreman of the works presided at its foot; so there was little rest or quiet for him this day.

The enjoyment round him was, however, so real, the mirth so genial that, after the first half-hour, he found it easy to

shake off the oppression of personal feeling—to throw himself into the spirit of the thing, to rejoice heartily with those who rejoiced.

The dinner was followed up by coffee in the news-room, and games on the piece of moor which had been enclosed within the precincts of the Institute, and which was to be used as a public play-ground.

The Hall was only cleared of the men, and of the dinner-cloths, plates, and glasses, to be prepared for the women's tea-drinking. Wilfred went home to fetch his mother, who was to superintend this branch of the festivities; having seen her deep in the mysteries of tea-making he returned to the cottage, and tried to look over his lecture. He found it impossible to fix his attention; besides, he already almost knew it by heart; so, abandoning the vain attempt, he threw himself down in a shady spot of the garden,

and indulged in the rest of day-dreaming. But on this busy day there was but brief space for any such indulgence. The dinner had commenced at twelve, the tea at three; the lecture was to be delivered at five, in order to meet the dining-time at Tyngelt Place, which was to-day an hour later than usual.

After the excitement of the morning, the mere delivering of a carefully-prepared lecture seemed a tame and ordinary affair; yet Wilfred was not quite calm about it. He stood among a knot of his big pupils, and watched the carriages drive up from Tyngelt Place and the occupants descend, till, having seen Felicia walk up the room with the same gentleman who had been seated by her side in the morning, and whom he knew to be Mr. Tregarther's nephew, Mr. Templar, he saw no more. Felicia had passed close to him and had not seen him, appearing

to be deeply interested in what her companion was saying to her.

A few moments after, he mounted the platform with his written lecture in his hand; he was introduced to his audience—a very unnecessary proceeding—by a Lord somebody, who made a little speech, something in which excited laughter, something else applause. All this Wilfred heard, as if he were hearing things in a dream: the sound of his own voice was the first thing that roused him to the reality of all around him.

His lecture occupied little more than an hour.

"Admirable!" "masterly!" and other flattering epithets were lavishly used by the aristocracy of the front ranks. Wilfred himself was almost satisfied; for, attentively watching his own peculiar audience, the miners, he had seen many faces brighten

to intelligent interest—very few show signs of weariness. Mr. Tregarther, feeling a sort of ownership in his secretary, triumphed in his triumph; his face expressed the most beaming satisfaction as he pressed Wilfred's hand at the close of the lecture. One of the Tyngelt carriages was to take Wilfred and his mother to the cottage, and to wait for them while they made their toilettes for the dinner at Tyngelt Place—so they escaped quickly from the crowded Hall.

"It has been almost too much, my son!" Mrs. Verbane said. "I wish all were over and we could have a long drive through this delicious quiet and coolness! Still, I want to see more of your friends—of Mrs. and Miss Southern."

"Why that sigh, mother?"

"I was only thinking that the time may come—I often pray that it may come—when

your old mother will not be the first in your heart. I did not mean to sigh."

"There is no first and last in pure love, mother. You will, I think, have me all, and always. At all events, I love you for ever. We will never part—never!"

As Wilfred spoke, his thoughts flew back over many years, and, landing him on the terrace at Beech Holmes, showed him the child Felicia clinging to her mother, and declaring, with soft steadfastness, that she would never leave her—never!

CHAPTER XII.

"We meet—after a lapse of changeful years;
We ask, with heart-beats, mingling hopes and fears,
If time has dimmed the memory of those tears—
Some bitter-sweet, some wrung from purest pain—
We wept for Love, sweet Love, then newly slain.
Do we ask, too, can dead Love live again?"

EVEN had not her idol been dashed from its pedestal, and her hero lowered lower than the common level, it is possible that the glamour of intellectual gifts and graces, and the charm of chivalric gentleness, which had combined to captivate the child, and the child-hearted girl, would not have sufficed to hold captive the thoughtful, true-

natured woman. What subtle avenues to the woman's heart were now, however, opened for that man, of whose good deeds, good influence, unflinching energy, and noble self-devotion, facts, and public opinion, agreed to speak eloquently! Unless some other love had replaced the early reverent worship in Felicia's heart, was not the hero of the girl's fancy likely to become the object of the woman's love?

A faithful and tender woman's heart can never quite close itself against the power and charm of early associations: it never forgets. It is only the hardened woman of the world who can meet the lover of her girlhood, or the object of her girlish love, and not be conscious of a quicker pulse, a stronger heart-beat, or a varying heat and colour on her cheek: even such are not always proof against the weapons of memory.

Mr. and Mrs. Verbane entered the drawing-room at Tyngelt Place after all the other guests had assembled there; and when the room, shaded by the creeper-screened Piazza, was already getting dusky.

The first glance showed Wilfred that Mrs. Southern sat near a distant window—that Felicia stood behind her chair in the shadow of the curtains.

After having been subject to many greetings, introductions, and congratulations, Wilfred found himself at last, his mother still leaning on his arm, approaching that window. Mrs. Southern rose, outstretching both her hands, her bright eyes shining affectionately into his.

"My dear boy, my dear boy's friend, I am proud of you—you have made an old woman's heart swell with joy!" she said, softly.

Mrs. Southern was lame now; having

risen to greet Wilfred, she sat down again, making room for his mother beside her. Felicia advanced a little, holding her hand out to Wilfred. In the obscure corner in which she stood, she had looked like a moon-lighted mist; but the hand was the soft, warm hand of a mortal maiden, and its singularly firm and fast, though gentle, clasp was the clasp of Felicia Southern.

Before Wilfred and Felicia had exchanged a single sentence, Mr. Tregarther brought his nephew up to the group to introduce him to Wilfred and to Mrs. Verbane. Just at this moment dinner was announced as served. Mr. Templar offered one arm to Mrs. Verbane, the other to Felicia, while Wilfred's arm was taken by Mrs. Southern. At table Wilfred found himself seated between the mother and daughter.

Mr. Templar vainly tried to monopolize Felicia's attention, the responsibility of

amusing Mrs. Verbane having been taken off his hands by her neighbour on the other side. Felicia was interested in the conversation carried on between her mother and Wilfred, and was natural enough to show that she was interested — so much interested, that only the great sweetness of her disposition enabled her to give heed enough to Mr. Templar's almost uninterrupted flow of clever talk, to prevent his being wounded by her want of appreciation.

And Wilfred? Fèlicia was near him —her full, soft dress touched him; more than once he purposely and reverently laid his hand on it. More than once he found an opportunity of addressing her; when she turned and answered him—the low-toned sweetness of her voice—the happy serenity of her eyes, so strangely touched and thrilled him, that he felt it almost

needful to shrink back from her, that the joy these woke in him might not too plainly shine from his face into hers.

Turning towards him and her mother, Felicia seemed the same Felicia as of old, with the old child-like grace and lowly candour in every look and word; for others—even for Mr. Templar — Wilfred noticed that she was different—for others there was something of stateliness in her sweet grace, and of grave reticence in her truthful candour.

"I do not say 'all or nothing,'" Wilfred thought, noticing this. "I will thank God for any place in that dear heart. If, as a woman, her love is given elsewhere, I will be grateful even for that pitying affection she gave me as a child."

The long and ceremonious dinner did not seem long to Wilfred. Sitting very near

a window, he escaped by it soon after the ladies left the table.

It was a softly-brilliant night, the moon near the full: many of the younger ladies were grouped on the dewless lawn or pacing up and down the Piazza. Felicia was not amongst them.

Entering the nearly empty drawing-room, Wilfred saw his mother and Mrs. Southern seated close together in a far corner of it, talking earnestly—while Felicia, resting her cheek on her mother's shoulder, kept her eyes fixed on Mrs. Verbane's face. He retreated unseen; passing along the Piazza, he found the library window open and the room unlighted; here he lingered, enjoying an interval of rest and of pleasant thought, till he heard Mr. Tregarther's voice asking—

"Where is Mr. Verbane? Has anyone seen Mr. Verbane?"

It was not till just as they were about to leave that Wilfred was able to approach Mrs. Southern again.

"I have been asking your mother to let us visit you to-morrow," she said. "We stay here only a day or two longer, and I want to see more of you both. You must both visit Beech Holmes soon."

"What time will you come to us? I do not wish to run any risk of being out. It is very kind of you to think of coming."

"We will come in the afternoon. We are going to have tea with you, and remain till dusk. I have settled it all with your mother."

"Thank you very much."

"You ought to go home now. It must have been such a tiring, trying day! Your mother is looking for you, I see—so good night—good-bye till to-morrow"

Wilfred took his leave, only half satisfied, for he could not see Felicia to say good night to her.

CHAPTER XIII.

> "Each liveth in the other; and yet see
> With careful reverence how they stand apart!
> Each shrouding from the other a warm heart,
> Beating with true love and pure constancy."

THAT morning Wilfred went early to Tyngelt Place, and proceeded straightway to the library. Allowing himself a few moments' indulgence before he began work, he walked to the window to look out—a light shawl and a book were on a chair on the lawn and near them, upon the grass, lay a little glove. After a hasty and guilty glance round, Wilfred stepped

from the window, crossed the Piazza, stooped, and possessed himself of that little glove—never doubting to whom it belonged.

He retreated into the room with his treasure, seated himself at his writing-table, and—what he might have done with the little glove it is impossible to say, for a step without disturbed him. Obeying a hasty impulse, he thrust it within his waistcoat; his hand was free only just in time to return the cordial grasp of Mr. Templar's.

"I beg your pardon for my hasty entrance. I did not know you came so early. I am looking for Miss Southern's glove. I thought she might, by chance, have passed through this way and dropped it."

Wilfred's cheek burnt, as, when left alone, he busied himself among his papers; he felt that a boyish and foolish action had

betrayed him into an absurd position—and he was inclined to think that young Templar half-suspected him of the theft of which he had been guilty. It was even possible that he might have seen its commission. He resolved to punish himself by returning the precious glove to its owner when he should find opportunity, with any such matter-of-fact excuse, or apology, as should not be untrue.

Mr. Tregarther appeared by-and-by, and pressed Wilfred to remain to luncheon; but he resolutely declined to do so, and, his business transacted, rode quickly home, ill-pleased with himself.

When the early dinner at Seafern Cottage was over, Wilfred busied himself with womanishly minute cares—striving to make his home look its best and prettiest.

His mother had already done her part: the muslin-curtains in the little parlour

were white as snow, and the garden was scrupulously neat. The roses in the cottage-garden thrived better than those in the rosary at Tyngelt Place. Mrs. Verbane had filled several glasses with them, so that the room was full of their fragrance. Wilfred arranged and re-arranged books, pictures and statuettes, till, his mother reproving him for his fidgetiness, he retired to his own peculiar den, and tried to occupy himself till his guests should arrive.

Lady Tregarther herself accompanied them, but she did not alight. The first sound of wheels brought Wilfred to the garden-gate, ready to help Mrs. Southern to step out of the carriage, and to ascend the garden-path. At the house-door Mrs. Verbane met and warmly welcomed her dear son's kind friends. Tears of pleasure rose to her eyes as she did so.

Felicia was the quietest of the party,

and she looked very pale to-day: the face of Wilfred's mother seemed to have a powerful attraction for her—her eyes sought it again and again, expressing—those sweet and truthful eyes!—tender interest and admiration; and as she looked, she forgot to talk.

"It is pleasant to escape from one of the long, formal dinners of Tyngelt Place!" Mrs. Southern remarked, when, by-and-by, the neat damsel began to bring in the tea. "We always dine early at Beech Holmes, and Mr. Tregarther's dinners tire me very much."

"Our dinner-time is rather uncertain," Mrs. Verbane said. "In one way or another Wilfred works so hard!—now-and-then he does not come home to dinner at all. How do you think he looks, Mrs. Southern? Sometimes I am afraid that he is wearing himself out."

"I am middle-aged and gray-haired, you see, Mrs. Southern," Wilfred interposed, trying to laugh off the embarrassment he felt; "and yet, would you believe it? this mother of mine—who by-the-by works twice as hard as I do—pets me and cares for me as if——"

"As if you were her only son, and a right good son!" Mrs. Southern said, warmly.

After tea, Mrs. Verbane wished to take Mrs. Southern over the house, and then they all meant to mount as far as the green hill-terrace.

Felicia and Wilfred, both leaning in the open window, found themselves left alone. Wilfred's heart beat strangely: he remembered the glove and the promise he had made to himself—but it seemed very difficult to keep this promise.

The glove was nevertheless presently produced, with the words—

"This is yours, I think, Miss Southern?"

The grave question sounded very abrupt, and startled a deep colour into Felicia's face.

"I must make confession of how I became possessed of it." Wilfred added, "I had picked it up on the lawn and I was contemplating its minuteness in the library when Mr. Templar came in search of it. Perhaps I was afraid of being suspected of a romantic theft, quite unbecoming my age and my position. Obeying a hasty impulse, I concealed the glove. I hope that you have not been inconvenienced by its loss."

"Not at all, thank you."

Felicia spoke sweetly, but with involuntary stateliness. She felt unreasonably chilled by the manner of her old friend; so close together—standing side by side—looking from one window—each felt the

other to be further off than when hundreds of miles had been between them. They were glad when the two mothers returned ready equipped for walking. Mrs. Southern went first, leaning on Wilfred's arm; Mrs. Verbane and Felicia followed, very slowly, for they were intently interested, both in each other, and in that of which they spoke. Wilfred's work among the people round Tyngelt—the veneration with which he was looked upon—Wilfred's sweetness at home, and his loving care of his mother—these formed the chief topics of Mrs. Verbane's talk.

When, reaching the hill-terrace, they all sat down, Mrs. Southern put her hand in Mrs. Verbane's.

Wilfred was near Felicia; he watched her ungloved fingers toying with the grass—with a restlessness of gesture that he had never noticed in her formerly—till he longed

to take the hand in his and hold it still—longed with an intensity of longing that became almost uncontrollable. How happily, how quietly, might the little hand then have entered his and rested there!

Withdrawing presently from the dangerous near neighbourhood of that desired hand, Wilfred passed a little way round the hill, and threw himself down upon the turf, where, unseen himself, he could still see Felicia.

The evening light shining full on the clear oval of her partly-averted face showed him that she was changed—more changed than he had thought. She still looked "die Schöne Engel-mild," but the mildness of her face was more grave—her smile was as lovely as ever, but less frequent; it died away more quickly, and left, as it found, an expression of confirmed stedfastness upon the delicate sweetness of her mouth. One felt more sure than formerly that the serenity of

her face signified more than the mere fine weather serenity of an untried spirit: that it signified power of suffering patiently and submitting faithfully — self-restraint so habitual, that it had ceased to need effort—self-denial so spontaneous that it was unconscious. He felt even more sure than formerly, that the face betokened depth and strength as well as sweetness of feeling—that its owner's love might be "difficile à acquérir," and would be "plus difficile à perdre."

As Wilfred gazed, he murmured to himself:—

> "In angeborner stiller Glorie,
> Mit sorgenlosem Leichtsinn, mit des Anstands
> Schnelmässiger Berechnung unbekannt,
> Gleich ferne von Verwegenheit und Furcht
> Mit festem Heldenschritte wandelt sie
> Die schmale Mittelbahn des Schicklichen."

He thought that Felicia's face would have served as fittest model for that of a Madonna, the highest impersonation of calm

power and love; or for that of some virgin martyr triumphing by power of faith and by the strength of meekness over the weakness of the flesh, and the terrors and temptations of the devil.

He thought these things and many more as he gazed at Felicia, till the overpowering force of the return tide of his love, swelling high and strong and threatening to sweep away many of the newly-set landmarks on the firm ground of temptations overcome, alarmed him.

"It is not safe," he said, aloud; "I am not fit or free to love her."

He averted his face, and, with his eyes fixed seawards, looking into infinity, he wrestled with his own soul.

"The old leaven of passionate selfishness is in me yet," he said. "If not, why can I not be happy, believing her heart to be given to another, whom all men would count

worthy? What can I offer her? How dare I think of desiring her love? How fair she is, and how spotlessly pure has been the book of her life always! It is true that she loved me once, and that her nature is constant and faithful; but she was as a child, and I was not what she thought me. She can only love what she believes to be all noble and worthy — this she knows I am not. I cannot help myself from loving her — I must love her for ever; but it must be without hope or desire of winning love from her; with the wish that she should give her life to one younger, worthier—all ways more fit to be loved by her."

After awhile Wilfred rose and rejoined the three ladies.

"Mother, do you think it is prudent of you to sit still so long? Is it not too cool here for Mrs. Southern?"

"Wondrous prudent are the young people of this generation; my girl has been warning me and shawling me, and now here comes your boy!"

Mrs. Southern held her hand out to Wilfred as she spoke, that he might help her to rise; but she took Mrs. Verbane's arm to assist her in descending the hill-side, and left "the young people" to follow.

It was not till Felicia had slipped on the short dry turf, and had nearly fallen, that Wilfred offered her his arm. Without a word she put her hand within it.

They walked on silently for some time; till Wilfred, oppressed by this silence, made some laughing comment on it, and added, what he felt, immediately he had spoken the words, had better not have been added—

"We used to find plenty to talk about."

"We used to know each other well;

Mr. Verbane makes me feel that he is quite a stranger."

Felicia said this quietly; but when she had spoken her face crimsoned, to turn very white afterwards.

A flood of thought and feeling rushed to Wilfred's lips, demanding expression: such things as he had schooled himself to believe that he must not even think almost forced themselves into speech. Commanding himself by a great effort, not even presuming to press nearer to him the hand that rested on his arm, he said—

"I think I ought to desire that all whom I wish should think well of me should meet Wilfred Verbane as a stranger, not associating him in any way with Wilfred Mason."

They had reached the garden-gate. Felicia, withdrawing her hand from Wilfred's arm, bent her face over a white rose-

bush, which, covered with blossoms, looked very lovely in the twilight. Perhaps she concealed a quick-risen tear as she did this, and as she called her mother's attention to the beauty of the flowers.

Promising his mother that he would be absent a shorter time than usual, Wilfred set off for the Institute, while the ladies went into the house to rest.

"I should like you to see him in the midst of his big rough pupils!" his mother said. "He looks so slight and weak among them, and yet a word or look of his controls and subdues them completely."

"From what I saw and heard yesterday, I can form an idea of the nature and of the extent of his influence! My own poor boy loved him, and always prophesied good and great things for him. I think that watching his friend's life now must be one of Herbert's joys where he is."

To this, and much more kindred talk—all sounding praise of Wilfred—Felicia listened with silent shining eyes. After giving a brief outline of her life to Mrs. Southern, Mrs Verbane said—

"You can judge how strange it seems to me that I should be blest with such a son, while you ——."

Here she felt her hand taken in Felicia's, raised to Felicia's lips: she added—

"But you have the dearest and sweetest of daughters"—and kissed the girl's forehead fondly.

Wilfred returned about half-past nine, and then the supper of fruit and simple country dainties was brought in. The carriage from Tyngelt Place came at ten. Wilfred had his horse brought round, that he might escort the ladies across the moor.

Mrs. Southern did not part from Mrs. Verbane without having extracted a pro-

mise from her that, nothing unforseen intervening, she and Wilfred would visit Beech Holmes at Christmas.

When they had started Mrs. Southern told Wilfred that she was sleepy, and that he must ride beside Felicia and talk to her. He obeyed the former part of the command; but again they were both very silent. The dewy moor and the glittering sea looked dreamily beautiful in the moonlight: it was almost as bright as day. They both seemed to find occupation enough in looking at the moor and the sea.

Leaning one hand on the carriage-door—as he called Felicia's attention to a line of ships whose sails were shining snow-white in the distance—bending down very near her, as he showed her in what direction to look—Wilfred saw that tears hung on the lashes of the true eyes that were raised to his face before they followed the direction of

his finger. He fancied that, as he addressed her as Miss Southern, the eyes appealed from his formal manner, with pain and tenderness mingling in them. As he fancied this, and was struck by the unchanged child-likeness of her look at the moment her eyes met his, his heart beat thick and fast—he was tempted—how sorely those only can know who have experienced like temptation—to breathe a few tender words, and to press his lips on the white brow which bent above those dear, tearful eyes.

He moved his hand from the door—he drew himself further from the carriage—he forced himself to talk on trifling uninteresting topics—and when the often-coveted hand met his in leave-taking, he did not hold it so long, or press it so warmly, as he did that of Mrs. Southern. Nothing could have been calmer than his face and

his manner—how cold, too, both seemed only Felicia's timid, shivering heart could have told.

Poor Felicia! Poor Wilfred! Yet perhaps Edgar Templar, who happened to be strolling about before the house when the carriage drove up the avenue, and who eagerly advanced to assist the ladies to alight—Edgar Templar, whom Wilfred envied just then with a bitter, burning envy—was far more to be pitied than either Wilfred or Felicia.

When the hall-door had closed upon his friends, Wilfred dashed down the avenue at the maddest of paces, unheeding its fairy-like moonlighted beauty. But when he found himself near home, he checked his horse to the slowest of slow walks.

The day had been one of self-restraint; now he let imagination run riot with loose rein.

"Felicia! Felicia! my heart seems to tell me that one day yet, in spite of all, you will be *my* Felicia! If I were but worthy—if my life had but been pure and true——difference of fortune, of position, should weigh for nothing, and I would try and win her. What grieved her to-night? What brought tears to her sweet eyes? I would give much to know—I never shall know. Reason says, she never can be my Felicia!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"O well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong."

ONE heavy afternoon, late in the autumn, Wilfred came home from Tyngelt Place unfit for anything but to lie on the sofa and be waited on.

There had been a long struggle going on within him. It seemed that he had won the victory over his spirit at the expense of his body. The two months that had passed since Felicia and her mother had left Tyngelt, had been two months of

constant, unvaried work: not work with the will, either, but against the will—against a demon of listless despondency that had taken possession of him, and which, he thought, was only to be starved out by finding nothing within him on which to prey. So he had allowed himself no idle moments, but had worked on till he was well nigh worn out: at Mr. Tregarther's work—at his own private literary work—at his good work at the Institute, and among the people. In doing thus he had over-shot his mark, overstrained his physical power, and now he fell prostrate; not, however, as one vanquished, but as the vanquisher, whose strength fails him in the moment of victory. The wasted face on which his mother's sorrowful eyes were fixed was a quiet and not unhappy face.

"I am just tired, mother—too tired to eat or sleep; that is all. I am quite

content to be here to-night, and to do nothing but watch the fire and your nimble fingers —quite content and quite happy. I have good news for you, too, mother. Mr. Tregarther is going to remain abroad some time longer yet, and he wishes me to take a complete holiday. Here is his letter: he generously encloses a cheque, which he requests me to spend in travelling. What do you say? Shall we leave Tyngelt to itself for a few weeks?"

"I meant to insist on your doing so—otherwise you will get no rest. Your holidays try you more than your working-days. Young Hind is quite capable of doing a great part of your work, and I am convinced that you absolutely require rest and change. It is your duty just now to consider your own health before anything —for my sake, and the sake of the work you may yet do."

"I believe I shall be the better for rest and change; though indeed, mother, there's not much the matter. When shall we start? Where shall we go?"

There followed a consultation, Wilfred's part of which was conducted somewhat languidly.

* * * * *

A heavy thunder-storm, and a deluge of drenching rain, detained Wilfred and his mother at a small road-side inn, in the heart of the most mountainous district of North Wales.

A gentleman and lady staying there had monopolized the best accommodation the house afforded, and the travellers could be but uncomfortably lodged.

"I am sorry I can do no better for you, mother," Wilfred said, as they sat down to a scanty dinner in the small public room, which was redolent of stale

tobacco, and damp coats and umbrellas; and the window of which at present seemed to command a view of nothing but a muddy road. "The worst of it is that I hear that, having missed the coach this afternoon, we shall be obliged to stay here till Monday."

"I do think it is going to clear," Mrs. Verbane said, with a hopeful glance outwards; "if it is fine we shall not much care what our indoor accommodation is. I prophesy that, before sunset, the weather will be lovely."

Mrs. Verbane was right. As the clouds rolled away from the sky, and the mist from the hills, they found that the window of the despised little room commanded a grand prospect. The sun came out, too, shedding a parting smile on the drenched landscape, and promising a fine day to-morrow. The gravel outside the inn door

presently crunched beneath the feet of a pony, and Mrs. Verbane rose, saying, as she went to the window :—

"We shall see our enemies now—the people who have monopolized the best of everything ; they are going out, I think."

Wilfred followed his mother. They saw a a dapper little groom holding a beautiful pony; then a smart lady's-maid came out on tip-toe, carrying a plaid which she arranged upon the saddle. A gentleman—a fine, tall fellow, in a tourist's travelling suit, whose face they could not see—next appeared upon the scene, carefully examined the pony's equipments, and re-arranged the plaid.

At last, after a considerable delay—during which the gentleman glanced into the house, down the valley and at his sketching apparatus alternately—a lady appeared. The gentleman lifted her into the saddle, and the maid arranged the folds of her habit, while the

groom still stood at the pony's head. The drooping feathers and lace of the lady's hat concealed her features, though her face was turned towards the inn, till, just as she was starting, she raised her head, and passed the window in review.

A sudden clutch of the rein, a sharp touch of the whip, and the pony, knocking down the groom, darted off at mad speed. The maid screamed, the groom picked himself up, and his master—whose face Wilfred and his mother saw now, and saw how white it had turned—dashed after the runaway.

After some moments the lady rode quietly by the window, the gentleman walking at her side. He picked up the sketch-book he had thrown down when he ran after the pony, and they proceeded in the opposite direction to that they had at first taken.

"She recognized you, Wilfred, but she did not see me. Her husband did not see either of us—he was too much engrossed by his cares for her," Mrs. Verbane said, turning to look at Wilfred.

While his mother went for her bonnet and cloak Wilfred remained at the window lost in thought.

"Was Eleanour happy?—did she love her husband?" he wondered. He imagined that hers was a nature which would love with passion or not at all—with passion that being itself a form of selfishness swallowed up all other selfishnesses while it lasted: it was thus that she had loved him. He could not imagine Eleanour as a wife who would love her husband with quiet and undemonstrative, because perfect, household love—with such love as is a daily devotion of unconscious self-sacrifice. Neither could he imagine the possibility of two

passionate loves in one woman's life. How then could Eleanour be happy?

Next morning Wilfred went out early for a solitary walk; when he returned to the house Mr. Edler was lounging in the porch, sunning himself. He recognized Wilfred immediately, but with sufficiently evident surprise to show that his wife had not informed him of her having done so the night before. Appearing glad to meet anybody with whom to exchange a few words he detained Wilfred. In the course of conversation he said (he had addressed Wilfred as Mason):—

"Do you know the name of a dark-haired middle-aged lady who is staying in the house? I met her on the stairs just now and seemed to know her face."

"Her name is Verbane," Wilfred answered, and did not enter into any explanation.

"I do not know the name, and yet I seemed to know the face. I am afraid any lady must be uncomfortably lodged here. I should like my wife to see about it—her maid occupies a room which we have no right to monopolize."

Considering this as only a passing thought in a good-natured man's mind Wilfred took no notice of it, but gave a new turn to the conversation. As he and his mother lingered over their late breakfast, however, a rustling in the passage was followed by a knock at their door, and Mrs. Edler's maid entered to ask if Mrs. Verbane would see her mistress. The answer being of course affirmative Mr. and Mrs. Edler entered.

Eleanour came in with superciliously-drooped lids, leaning on her husband's arm, looking stately, languid, and handsome; but much aged since Mrs. Verbane had last seen her. When she raised her sullenly-

haughty eyes and found herself face to face with 'Wilfred Mason' and 'Mrs. Lister' every trace of colour left her face.

She turned sharply to her maid, saying—

"This is one of your stupid mistakes, Ann—this *person* is not Mrs. Verbane."

Mr. Edler, astonished to find Wilfred and the lady whose face he had thought he ought to know and whom he now remembered to have known as Mrs. Lister, domesticated together, looked to Wilfred for an explanation.

"This *lady* is Mrs. Verbane, and my mother," Wilfred said, fixing his eyes sternly on Eleanour as he placed a chair for her. Her eyes immediately fell before this look from his. She took the chair he offered her, and appeared to wrap herself in a mantle of unapproachable silence, while her husband, Mrs. Verbane, and Wilfred tried to decrease the awk-

wardness of the meeting by conversing on safe general topics, even by slight and general explanations. When Wilfred addressed her Eleanour just answered him and then relapsed into her former statuesque coldness and silence : to all her husband's efforts to rouse her and draw her into the conversation she was wholly irresponsive.

After sitting in this manner for about a quarter of an hour she rose abruptly, gathered her shawl round her, called for her husband—and, after a haughty and formal leave-taking, standing silent and still, while her husband made kind offers and said good-natured things for her and for himself, she swept from the room. Wilfred threw up the window as far as it would go directly the door closed behind her. A rich, strong perfume which Eleanour Narpenth had always used pervaded

the small room, making its atmosphere oppressive—but was it only this of which he wished to rid it?

Neither he nor his mother made other comment on their visitors than this, and the significant words, "Poor Edler."

Meanwhile Eleanour, having regained her pretty sitting-room upstairs, threw herself on the sofa, exclaiming—

"See what you have subjected me to by your absurd quixotism, Hermann! The shock I have received has knocked me up for the day!"

"Did you know of Mason's, or rather of Verbane's, presence in the house?"

"I saw him at the window last night."

"Just before your pony started off?"

"Just before my pony started off."

"Did you know of his change of name?"

"I knew he had changed his name—nothing more. Don't bore me by ques-

tions. Read to me—something amusing. I feel that I shall be ill after this shock."

"What shock? As you knew that Mason was in the house I do not see what overwhelming shock you can have received. But had you treated me with candour I could have spared you this meeting."

Mr. Edler's manner was cold, nay even somewhat contemptuous. Eleanour was evidently astonished by it. Half raising herself, resting on her arm, she looked at him with kindling eyes and rising colour.

"You ask what shock it is to which you have subjected me. It will be well for you not to repeat that question, Mr. Edler; it may receive too plain an answer."

"I do repeat my question, Eleanour—to what great shock have I subjected you?"

"I will tell you then," she answered, defiantly and passionately. "The shock of

being brought face to face with a man whom I loved, as I never loved and never shall love you—loved with a devouring, uncontrollable passion that betrayed itself to him and demanded his love—loved with such a love as made me cling to him, and shut my eyes to the truth that he did not love me. The shock of meeting this man face to face to feel that his old power is not gone—that I could have thrown myself at his feet to-day as I have done in times gone by—the shock of feeling this and of reading in his eyes love for a woman I hate, and cold, contemptuous reproof for me. Have you heard enough, Mr. Edler or shall I tell you more?"

Her husband had drawn near her: he stood looking down on her—their eyes met—perhaps she read in his something of the work she had done—perhaps she

was frightened by the expression of his face. She averted hers, buried it in the sofa-cushions, and began to sob convulsively. He waited by her and watched her with unflinching and unsoftening eyes. She was mistaken if she thought her tears and sobs could bring him to her feet.

"You have taught me a lesson for which I thank you," he said, when she was quiet enough to hear him. "For five long years, years which crowned the constancy of a life, I have tried by untiring devotion to win your love. There shall be no more of this folly. You shall have no more chance of trampling on my love; and of stabbing my honour with your tongue. I will change our way of life."

Dangerous sparks flashed from his eyes; he pushed the slightly-grizzled, strong, black hair back from his resolute brow, and stood above her a justly-angry, much-

wronged man—a man who had endured long, and meant to endure no longer.

"You will play Petruchio, perhaps?" she said, attempting a tone of raillery. "Be warned! I am a shrew he would never have tamed—he would have died by my hand."

"Play Petruchio?" he asked, bitterly. "For what? Indeed, I shall not be at that trouble. For Petruchio there was a prize worth winning—a shrew worth taming. Katherine was—— what my wife has shown me that she is not."

"Make use of my confession! Perhaps I said more than I meant. Your indifference roused me to anger. Load me with insult—threaten me—that is manly!"

"The manliness a woman of your sort can alone appreciate; manly forbearance, consideration, gentleness, all go to feed your faults. You have taught me that women and

cowards only love those who oppress them and trample on them—as far as is in my nature I will profit by your lesson. You are right to treat a man who has fawned on you and followed you like a spaniel as you might have treated that spaniel—only worse, far worse. You are right to lavish on a scornful lover the regrets that a more simple woman might regard as treason against a devoted husband! I choose now to exchange parts with you—I will exact obedience, the sacrifice of your charming caprices. You must conform your life to mine. I have a serious purpose in life—you have none. I will bear this in mind. You think me brutal to-day — you will often think me so. I have to thank you for a rough awakening from an enervating dream. You are morally sick with a sickness unto foul disease and death; I mean to undertake your cure. You will not thank me now—

any more than a spoiled child thanks the father who chastises it. I know that you will not. You will be violent and mutinous. I, however, am not a man to be conquered by a woman who does not love me. I will be rough and resolute. I leave you now. I am going to church—I am superstitious enough to desire to ask a blessing there upon my work as a physician."

He left her alone through all the weary hours of a fine Sunday. Coming home at night he found her asleep on the couch where he had left her. As he stood by her, watching her uneasy slumber, there was a heartstricken mournfulness in his face, and his eyes expressed a sorrowing pity—of himself, of her, or of them both.

"Strengthen me for the work—let me win her and save her!" he cried.

He left her where he found her and himself retired to rest. Worn out by fatigue

and fasting he was surprised by the sleep he had meant to feign.

Little by little, slowly and toilfully, love, wise now and no longer blind, conquered and won love again. Not pure, unselfish, and all-comprehending love—but such love as being a second selfishness kept more direct selfishness in abeyance—such love as owed some of its strength to fear and yielded as its chief fruit obedience.

Hermann Edler, therefore, found the chief good of life to consist in work: he devoted himself to art and won fame. For the tinge of mournfulness in all his representations of life—for his deep-lying scepticism of human happiness—for his constant dwelling on one theme in its infinite varieties—the reaping of misery and disappointment from fulfilled wishes and granted prayers — for these things his wife must answer as best she may.

CHAPTER XV.

> "A shock of pleasure may be or may be of pain
> And then the hopes that had ebbed out—hopes idly vain,
> Return in full spring-tide to flood the heart again."

"You, perhaps, have already heard of this, Verbane?" Mr. Tregarther said, entering paper in hand the library at Tyngelt Place where his secretary was writing. "This may possibly account for Miss Southern's having discouraged my nephew, Templar."

Mr. Tregarther did not raise his eyes from the paper; Wilfred's fingers still moved over a half-covered sheet, as he said, feeling that he was expected to say something—

"Miss Southern is married then?"

"Married! who told you so?"

"I imagined that that paper told you so."

"Dear me, no!"

Wilfred laid down his pen and leant back in his chair, looking at Mr. Tregarther for an explanation.

"To what do you allude, then?"

"Beech Holmes *is* the name of the Southern's place, is it not?"

"Certainly."

"Beech Holmes is advertised for sale—here, read the advertisement. No name of the owners is mentioned, but it is not likely that there are two estates of that name in the same county. I can't in the least understand it. The sum Ireton left Mrs. Southern was a large one—yet, you see—'to be sold for benefit of the creditors, etc., ——'"

The words, all contained in the advertise-

ment, "Manor-house," "timber," "pasture," "sheep-walks," jumbled themselves together unintelligibly in Wilfred's head. He pushed the paper from him.

"You know nothing more than you have learnt from this?" he asked.

"Nothing—and you?"

"Nothing."

"I am deeply concerned for them, so will Lady Tregarther be. I must go and talk it over with her and see if nothing can be done in the way of inviting them here."

"Mr. Tregarther lingered at the door for some time longer before he was fairly gone—but Wilfred heard very little of what was said.

When he was alone again he remained idle for a few moments, and his face was grave, and intently thoughtful. After those few moments he continued his interrupted

business, quickly completed it and then rode home very fast through driving, blinding November rain and sleet.

"You have heard it already," he said, after a glance into his mother's face.

"This letter from Mrs. Southern came just after you left the house." As she spoke, she helped to pull off his wet coat; then having brought him his slippers and pushed his chair near the fire she stood in the window, looking out, watching the rain; listening to its dreary splashing, and pitying the poor battered-about late flowers, while Wilfred read.

Mrs. Southern's letter was addressed to his mother.

"Dear Friend," it began:—

"Our Christmas meeting, if indeed we meet at all, will not be at Beech Holmes, as we had planned. No doubt you have already heard of our changed for-

tune. You must forgive us that you were left to hear of it indirectly. Felicia and I each believed that the other had written to you. My girl does everything—I thought that she had done this.

"I never valued the fortune that came to us so unexpectedly. It caused us much trouble in its coming, and I always felt that it came too late — too late to save my son, whose health was undermined by long unremitting application; but now its sudden departure leaves us poorer than it found us — burdened by debts to pay off which we sell Beech Holmes. I have to reproach myself, too, for our losses; I allowed a person towards whom I had always felt a certain amount of distrust to manage all the business, and did not seek advice from any one. Well, he was not much better than a swindler, and was connected with swindlers, and this is the consequence.

"We linger at Beech Holmes as long as it is any way possible. God knows that it will be a trial to us to leave it; but as yet we keep quite cheerful — perhaps we have not yet taken our trial home. Felicia is always an angel of consolation; yet, of course, it is for her I grieve—wealth in her hands would have been a blessing to hundreds. She says, however, that she should have been made unhappy by its responsibilities—that, but for having to leave Beech Holmes, she should be glad that our wealth was gone — that she has never been very happy since it came.

"Of our plans for the future I can say nothing yet. I have no one with whom to consult; both Arthur and John Landon are still abroad with their wives and families, and Mary's husband has accepted an East Indian appointment.

"Felicia is everything to me. Even I, who

know her well, am astonished sometimes by the depth of her calm, practical sense, and by her unruffled cheerfulness.

"It shall not be long before I write again. Greet your son fondly for me, and

"Believe me, my dear friend,

"Ever faithfully yours,

"EDITH SOUTHERN."

"I shall go to Beech Holmes, mother!" Wilfred said; the tone—clear, firm, almost joyous—startled Mrs. Verbane; "I must start to-night; it is not fit for them to be so alone at such a time—I may be of some use to them."

"Directly I had read Mrs. Southern's letter I answered it, Wilfred, in the way I thought you would wish. I asked them to come and be our guests for a while. Need you go, as I have done this?"

"I think I need, mother. They will not come."

"You must judge, my son—I will get your portmanteau ready at once."

As the mother and son parted a few hours later Mrs. Verbane said:—

"In all things do what is best for you and for them—do not study me. I shall be content and happy any way!"

"God bless you, mother!" was his fervent answer.

CHAPTER XVI.

"For Love himself took part against himself."

ABOUT nine o'clock on a dismal November night Wilfred reached Beech Holmes. The moon's light struggling through the fog showed him the gaunt, bare arms of the noble beeches swinging and swaying about; a sound as of sobbing and wailing eddied in the air—perhaps it was the sound of their leave-taking lament as they stretched their aged hands to each other across the road—for on the trunks of some of them were fatal figures, telling that their days were numbered.

As Wilfred went up the avenue, ascended the terrace-steps, crossed the flags and stood in the porch, the past and present mingled strangely: it seemed to him that Herbert's arm was passed through his—that Herbert's breath was on his cheek—and his kind words of welcome sounding in his ear.

"As far as is in my power I will take your place," he said aloud; "I will strive to put self aside for a time and to be a son to your mother, a brother to your sister."

He did not give his name to the servant who admitted him, but merely asked to see Mrs. Southern. Following the girl across the cold dismantled hall, past the open doors of desolate, dark chambers, she led him to the door of the small oak-panelled room which had been Mrs. Southern's peculiar den, and left him to enter unannounced.

The room was dimly lighted.

Felicia sat at a table littered with papers, her face was turned from the door and towards the fire by which Mrs. Southern was lying half-asleep. The servant shut the door after Wilfred rather noisily. Felicia did not look up from the figures on which she seemed so intent, but the sound roused Mrs. Southern. She rose, peered at Wilfred with something like terror in her face, and then advanced a few steps towards him.

Her voice had a shrill intonation which made Felicia look up with a startled air as she asked:—

"Is it Wilfred? Wilfred Mason?"

"It is Wilfred—Wilfred Verbane," he said, as he took her hand in his and led her back to her couch. She sat down on it speechless and trembling.

"I am very sorry I startled you—I did

not mean to do that," Wilfred observed, penitently.

"This is kind, and a great pleasure," Felicia said. She had had time to recover from her first surprise and came towards Wilfred with outstretched hand. The face she raised towards his was very pale—the eyes that looked into his with such soft thankfulness were full of tears; he took her hand in both his, bent over her and kissed her cheek, saying, as he did so:—

"I want to fill Herbert's place—let me be as a brother, your elder brother to you for a time."

The expression of child-like reliance with which that poor, pale face had looked up into his, had made the action seem natural. His kiss had been kind and calm; but when he saw a faint crimson suffuse Felicia's cheeks as she turned quickly from

him, he was troubled, and doubted had he acted well.

As a lover he would not have dared to kiss her then, he would have thought it cruel and cowardly to presume to do so; but his was not a lover's kiss, he had temporarily abrogated other hopes and claims, and wished her to feel in him only the calm, protecting tenderness which a brother would have shown her—that she might freely come to him for such aid as a brother might have given her.

Felicia did not misunderstand his action; it was his kindness, contrasting with the coldness of his manner towards her at Tyngelt, that had overwhelmed her for a moment; but after that moment she regained her self-possession—she showed that she had not misunderstood his action by treating him as if indeed he had been her brother.

Mrs. Southern made Wilfred take an easy-chair by the fire, upon which she piled wood with her own hands, while Felicia herself superintended the preparation of his supper. He was made to feel that he was a most welcome guest.

"I have longed to have some one besides that poor child to lean on," Mrs. Southern said, while Felicia was absent; "for I feel as if she were a slender reed, which I am bowing down to the ground. I cannot thank you enough for coming, so I shall not try to thank you at all." She went on to speak more of her daughter.

After supper, Felicia again bending over those weary papers, Mrs. Southern gave Wilfred a full and detailed account of the events of the last few months — of the nature of the fraud of which she had been a victim. He was not a very attentive listener; for his watchful eyes noted that

Felicia's hand was once or twice raised and pressed against her brow, and that her mouth, by its firm compression, gave sign of suffering.

"You are tiring yourself," he said, at last, approaching and stooping over her. "You might trust a brother to attend to this for you—might you not?"

"I will do no more to-night," she answered, looking up into his face with a sweet smile, that was by no means a sad smile—his kindness made her very happy. "I am tired—a little. My head is always a very stupid one at figures." She left the table and took the chair that Wilfred placed for her by the fire.

Mrs. Southern, wishing to see that Wilfred's room was ready and a good fire burning there, left them together by-and-by. Of course they then talked chiefly of her. Felicia spoke of her mother's bright

heroic way of bearing trouble, of her rapidly increasing infirmities, and of her fear that her courage must give way when it came to the last—to leaving Beech Holmes.

"At your mother's age, and by people with your dear mother's faith, such things are not acutely felt, I think," Wilfred said. "We all, I suppose, comfort ourselves more or less in times of trouble by thinking of the shortness of life, by dwelling on the fact that each day we leave behind shortens by so much our time of trial. At your mother's age this consolation is more vividly present; she feels herself to be near her long home. It is for you, Felicia, that she regrets this change the most." There was a pause; then he added—"Did you think me presumptuous in asking to be looked upon as a brother?—an elder brother?"

"No! Oh no!"

"But perhaps you would hardly suffer even an elder brother to approach the subject on which I want to speak a few words. Your mother, while you were from the room, told me of Mr. Templar's visit—of the way in which he pressed his former suit when he heard of your change of fortune. Will my praise of Mr. Templar have any weight with you? I could tell you much about him that would raise him in any good woman's estimation. He is an excellent young fellow, with aims and views far higher than ordinary."

"Mr. Templar has his final answer." Felicia spoke with something more like petulance and haughtiness than Wilfred had ever heard her use before. "He meant well," she said, "and, no doubt, the world would say that he acted generously; but it was with difficulty that I could refrain from showing that I thought him impertinent and ungenerous."

"Why so, Felicia?" He looked at her, leaning his head on his hand and shading his face from the light of the fire.

"What right had he to dream that my change of fortune could change my heart? Was it not something like an insult to act as if he thought this possible? Must he not have thought very meanly of women before he could have done this?" Felicia, with kindled eyes, burning cheeks, and a thrill of passion trembling through her voice, was very different from any Felicia Wilfred had known before; nevertheless, this Felicia would have pleased him well, but for one thought that rose in his mind.

"You judge young Templar sternly—with less than your wonted charity," he said, reprovingly.

"He could not have acted as he did had his love been unselfish." She persisted—"He must have thought too much of

how grandly generous his offer proved him to be—not enough of how mean and base I should have proved myself had I accepted it."

"This is not like you—you are not charitable, Felicia." Wilfred spoke harshly, stung with pain by the thought—"Will she judge me thus if, by-and-by, I supplicate for that for which I did not ask while I believed her to be wealthy?"

"Not charitable?" she asked, while her lip quivered. "I hope I am not becoming hard and bitter; sometimes I fear I am. I think I shall grow better now that we are poor again—as we were when we lived abroad. I have not been happy lately." Meeting Wilfred's eyes, all soft once more, and full of pity, she bowed her head down on her hands and let her tears have way—only for a moment.

"Is not this ungrateful?" she asked.

"You see I am a spoiled child, and cry if I am scolded. Do not scold me to-night—I am very tired, you cannot think how tired. Mamma thinks me so strong and so wise, and I am very glad, for that is a comfort to her; but really I am very, very weak and foolish. I feel sometimes as if my heart would break: it seems sometimes as if I could find nothing safe, nothing sure, to rest upon. This must be because I am not good—must it not? I know I ought not to feel like this."

It might have required more strength for self-restraint than Wilfred even now possessed to make him refrain from taking this weary, weeping child into his arms and telling her of his love and of how she must learn to rest upon that; but just at this moment Mrs. Southern returned to the room.

For the next few days Wilfred ruled himself with a hand of iron; he had his reward—the reward he desired—he was allowed to arrange and settle everything for Mrs. Southern and Felicia, thus sparing them much trouble and much pain. He could not, however, prevail upon them to accept his mother's invitation and become her guests; he found that they had already taken a small house, standing in the Minster Yard of the neighbouring town of Silver-Thorpe, to which they meant to remove on the day before the sale. They had no secrets from him; he knew that at present Mrs. Southern's income was enough to pay the rent of this house, and to leave them about twenty pounds a-year besides; but there was some hope that in a few years this small income would be doubled.

As a means of increasing this scanty pittance, Felicia proposed to give lessons;

she had already made her wish to obtain pupils known.

Wilfred endured much during these days, while — maintaining resolute silence as to his hope and his love—he heard the kind of life Felicia planned for herself calmly discussed. To think of such a life for Felicia — and to dread that, not loving him with such love as could mature to wifely love, she would refuse to share with him a life which if she loved him they could each make so bright for the other — to bear about this unresolved doubt and dread was indeed stern torture.

The last day of lingering at Beech Holmes came, bringing with it a pause from incessant thought and toil: everything that had to be done was done, and this day was to be a day of rest.

Mrs. Southern was, by her own wish, left alone in her room for the greater part

of it. Towards afternoon, Felicia, having for the last time visited every part of the house, came to the room which they had alone used of late, where Wilfred was.

She was very wan and cold: the smile with which she answered Wilfred's look was a sickly smile; she did just as he desired her—sat down on the couch which he drew close to the fire, dropping her head upon the pillow so wearily! She closed her eyes, but he saw the tears creeping through the lashes and trickling down the white cheeks—saw the quivering of her mouth, and the painful working of her slight fingers.

Seeing all this, he mused. She looked so very frail, so utterly weary, so unfit for the life of toil that was just opening before her, as if the very prospect and contemplation of it might be enough to crush her!

"If she loves me," he thought to himself—"if she loves me, it will be good for her now to know of my love, and to have that dreary, weary prospect shut out. She would rest upon my love—lean upon it in full confidence; it would strengthen and comfort her, the poor, tired child! If she does not love me— Well, any way I must go home soon, there is not much more that I can do. Even if she does not love me, to know of my love, sometimes to think of it, might change the sad current of her thoughts and give her some rest from those which trouble her.

So he mused. Then he spoke, saying only her name.

"Felicia!" At the sound of his voice the dim eyes opened and fixed themselves on him, but the girl did not raise her head. His heart beat violently—his breath

came fast and thick. He drew a little nearer, but not close to her.

"Felicia, you will not condemn me as you did Mr. Templar—you must not—you cannot, for you know that I loved you long ago, when I was utterly unworthy—not only unworthy of your love, but utterly unworthy to love you. I do not mean that I am worthy now; but I love you, Felicia, with all love—I have never ceased to love you. I have kept this love in my own heart very long, but it will be heard at last. You will never part from your mother—I never will part from mine; but if you love me, Felicia—if you feel that, knowing of my love, you can learn to love me, let us be one household—be my wife, come home to me with your mother."

She had raised her head from the pillow to listen. As he spoke, light, warmth,

and beauty came back into her face—her eyes shone wtth a great awe and joy. Implicitly believing what he told her of his constant love, she triumphed in it—not for her own sake, but for his—triumphed in his nobleness of constancy. She understood both his self-restraint in not speaking earlier and his reason for speaking now—all he had done, and his motives where he had forborne to do—everything connected with him presented itself to her in a glorified light. She exulted in the greatness and the goodness of the man whom she loved—loved utterly.

Wilfred came no nearer: he did not understand the expression of her face. He could have fallen on his knees and worshipped its pure beauty—he stood still, waiting for her judgment.

He spoke again—before she had time to collect her thoughts:—

"One entreaty I have to make: if you do not love me with such love as I bear you—and I hardly dare dream that you do—forget what I have said. Let me be anything, so that I still may be something to you. I can live without your love, perhaps; but your friendship, your affection, I *must* have, Felicia."

She rose and approached him. He felt instantly that she came to him not to give him herself, but her denial.

"Only that I know that you would be pained to see me kneel, I could thank you on my knees for your noble love and constancy—love and constancy which I cannot repay in the way you wish, but to think of which seems like some wonderfully-beautiful, strange dream to me. Dear Wilfred, you have made me very happy, but it cannot be as you desire—I cannot be your wife!"

Her voice was hardly audible speaking the last few words. She held her hands out to him, but did not trust herself to meet his eyes. Taking her hands, he bowed his head over them submissively. Leaning his forehead on them, he said:—

"God has decided. I am not worthy. He has not let your heart love me."

Her lips parted and her face flushed.

"Never say that you are not worthy!" she cried. "It hurts me to hear you say that! It is I who have not been worthy to have been constantly loved by a heart given to the service of God and of your fellow-men as yours has been. It is strange and wonderful to me that you should love me."

He looked up—an eager, inquiring look, in which was a dawn of transient hope.

"It cannot be—I cannot be your wife! I have decided!" she said, in a low, firm voice.

Wilfred bowed his head down upon her hands again and then a momentary anguish dashed her solemn joy; as her eyes rested on the greyness of that bowed head her soul was penetrated by pity.

When he dropped her hands and once more stood erect, her face was clear, pure, and serene. They looked fearlessly into each other's eyes, and he felt that she indeed loved him!—with the love of angels—with love akin to divine love, with love that loves what most needs loving. Nevertheless, he implicitly believed her words—that she could not be his wife—believed that God had not suffered her heart to be drawn towards him in that way.

Putting away personal pain—suppressing the anguish of his disappointment, he said:—

"This need make no difference between us. You may trust me—I will conquer my-

self. I will never importune you to give me what you choose to withhold from me. I will be content to be your friend—but I must be a close and dear friend."

That last clause had a touch of passionate imperiousness.

"My very dearest friend," she said, true-heartedly. "I shall never have a dearer—I feel that nothing will come between us here or hereafter."

She feared she had said too much—yet she felt she owed him no less. She did not think at all of her own dignity—she only longed to give him all assurance of all love—save only such assurance of such love as would give him a right to claim her as his own—to take her burdens upon himself.

He sighed, perhaps incredulous of the endurance of such a bond. Other words trembled on her lips; but she turned and fled—

ran upstairs to her own little room, her harbour of refuge. Alone! no ears to hear her, her heart would speak!

"I love him! I have always loved him! I am proud that I love him! His wife!'—I would gladly be his slave; he would be more tender to his slave than other men to their wives—more tender and more true. Ah, I love him! Do I remember the time when I did not love him? And now I know surely that he loves me must I be for ever silent about my love? My tears fell among his grey hairs—as I looked at them I almost gave way. Why must I turn away from happiness purer, clearer, deeper than I ever dreamed life would offer me? Because I love him. Does pure love lay heavy burdens on what it loves, and fetter it with heavy chains? I know what his life now is—what a glorious good life it is, and—he has his

mother—he was happy when I saw him at Tyngelt—and he .was free—his noble hands were free—his noble thoughts were free. Oh for a little of our wealth to come back! then he should take us home with him!—take me and my mother, and I should be his wife, and know such rest! Oh, pitiful Father! show me, teach me—do I do well? Must I relinquish this great happiness?"

She was on her knees by her bedside now, wringing her upraised hands while tears streamed down her cheeks.

"I cannot see Thee — I cannot feel Thee, Father!—all is dark, and I am alone, alone!" she moaned. Then, from striving to pray, she found her thoughts wandering to what might be, if—— she dared not contemplate the bright possibility.

"He has had a hard life—he is grow-

ing old before his time—grey and wasted and worn—how can I lay more burdens on him—clog his usefulness and cause his hand to refrain from giving and his thoughts from travelling wheresoever they will? Would not his mother hate me?—his mother, who sacrificed so much for him?"

Felicia rose from her knees less calmed and comforted than ever before in her life; she had no confidence in her own decision—she mistrusted her heart and her reason equally.

That night, as she lay by her mother, awake through all the hours of the last night in their old home, she said to herself perpetually:—

"If I have done right, why am I not at peace? As a child I was only miserable when I was naughty. Why can I find no peace, no rest? Why does my

heart ache in this way? Does Wilfred suffer as I do? If so, I must be wrong to give him such pain—such gnawing, wearing pain. But no! he is a man—and is doing a noble man's work. I am but a weak-hearted woman. It is not likely that he suffers as I do; he will go home to his mother and his work, and will—not forget me—no, but remember me only as a dear, distant friend."

It was new for Felicia to feel her life-barque tossing on such troubled waters. Now it seemed to her that her conduct in denying herself to Wilfred was presumptuous—that, loving her as he did, he had a right to her. Then, again, as she thought of his mother and of hers, of the sensitive delicacy of his physical organization and of his anxious, nervous temperament, her love justified the decision of her reason, and she told herself that it was

selfishness, not love, which urged her to be deaf to all besides, and to listen only to her own importunate heart.

"Yet, if I am doing right, why am I not at peace?" she asked herself again and again.

CHAPTER XVII.

> "My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
> My heart is swollen with love unsaid;
> Oh, let me weep and tell my pain,
> And on thy shoulder rest my head."

Mrs. Southern and Felicia soon settled down in their new home. It was a small house in the quiet Minster Yard of Silverthorpe: its front windows looked upon some fine old trees which, when clothed, nearly shut off the Minster, and from which arose that cawing of rooks always so suggestive of immemorial calm. At the back lay a rich open

country, bounded by the hills that rose behind Beech Holmes.

To look upon these familiar hills, even from an unfamiliar point of view, was a pleasure to Felicia. Many favourite books and ornaments and a few small pieces of old-fashioned furniture which had found their way from Beech Holmes to Silverthorpe, gave the small house a pleasant, home-like aspect.

Wilfred had remained at Beech Holmes a day or two after the departure of the mother and daughter in order to make some final arrangements in their name. He now lingered in Silverthorpe, sleeping at the "Golden Lion," but spending nearly all his time at Mrs. Southern's. Each day was to be his last day; but he lingered on, detained by a dim hope and suspicion—hope and suspicion born of Felicia's changed manner towards him.

But both his hope and his suspicion were dim—sometimes they died out utterly. These days of lingering were peculiarly trying to Felicia. There was a pause in her life—a pause between the past and future—past excitement and future work. They should have been days of rest. She deeply needed rest, but she could find no rest while Wilfred was still near her, and still so far from her. She earnestly desired that he would leave her and go home; and she sickened at the very thought of the desolation she should feel when he was gone. He treated her with a reverent tenderness and a gentle consideration that often nearly overpowered her—waking in her such longing to fall at his knees, and to confess all her love and all her deep dire pain! Her manner towards him became very uncertain: sometimes she shunned him, and could hardly bear to meet his

eyes—at other times she could not tear herself from his presence, and her own eyes would dwell with overflowing love on his averted face. Felicia felt herself to be changed—it seemed to her as if things foreign to her nature warred within her—as if some power beyond her control worked upon her. Sometimes she glided from the room where Wilfred and her mother sat, and, locking herself into her own, abandoned herself to grief—so wild, so passionate, that she herself was frightened at its force, and would afterwards fervently ask God to forgive her wickedness—to aid her to cast out the evil spirit that possessed her; but these fits were not frequent—generally she was quiet and her grief was dumb. Of what had passed between her and Wilfred she had as yet told her mother nothing; she waited till Wilfred should be gone—ah!

when *would* he go?—what should she do when he was gone?—how bear and hide her deep desolation?

Poor girl!—she was truly not herself—she was over-worn and ill—unable to sustain this self-conflict. The heaviest heaviness of her trouble was, that, unlike all other trouble she had known in her short life, she could not lay it down in prayer. She found no rest for it on God—no peace within herself—no peace of conscience. Her very dreams were dreams of dread: sometimes Wilfred's face, lighted by reproachful eyes, haunted them; sometimes his mother appeared before her and cried—"You have stolen my son—you have killed him—you have laid heavy burdens on him, and have crushed him to the ground!"

At last Wilfred one day said firmly:—

"I go to-morrow."

Felicia felt that this was a fixed decree. He came to the house at dusk on his last evening. The house had two tiny parlours, one on each side the door. In one Mrs. Southern was asleep on the sofa—in the other Felicia was working by the light of a solitary candle: she could not bear idleness and fire-light thoughts. Letting him in softly, that no noise might be made to rouse her mother, she led him into the room where she had been sitting.

"Mamma had a wakeful night and is asleep now," she said. Then she took up her work again, and drew the candle nearer.

All the bloom of Felicia's beauty was gone; her thin cheeks wore an ashen pallor, telling of a languid beating heart, and of sad and stagnant blood. Her mouth had a painful, quiveringly-compressed ex-

pression; her eyes were surrounded by dark circles, and appeared to hold within them little but trouble and pain; even her beautiful hair seemed to have lost its gloss and brightness—to-night it was carelessly pushed back behind her small ears, leaving the blue-veined temples bare—and this added greatly to the faded and forlorn look of her face. And all this faded forlornness, this change, this waste of beauty, did but move Wilfred's heart to more intense love—mixing new elements of sorrow and of pity with the clear, pure flame of his passion.

"I think I ought to ask your pardon for having lingered here so long, Felicia," Wilfred said, as he watched her fingers; "I fear it was selfish and has given you pain; I certainly leave to-morrow."

"Your mother will be very glad to have you home," she answered, without raising her eyes.

Her heart beat suffocatingly now with what seemed to her a muffled violence; she thought drearily how cold and ungrateful, how insensible to his devotion, he must think her!—and she could not help his thinking her so: she must repress and not express her feelings—did she but give way a little, all would be lost.

"You look ill, dear Felicia—ill, and not happy," Wilfred ventured to remark. "Is it because, in the tenderness of your heart and its pity for me, you reproach yourself for not being able to love me in the way I desire? If so, be comforted—I shall always thank God that I have loved you—that I love you; my love for you has been, and will always be, a purifying, high influence. If you cannot love me as I would fain be loved by you, I take that as a sign from God that I am unworthy of the blessing I desired."

"Oh, hush!" she said, hastily; "you pain me—you think of me so much too well; I am so different from what you think me!"

He smiled, sadly enough—but even sadly she could not smile.

"Is that Wilfred? Is Wilfred there?" Mrs. Southern asked from the next room.

"Go to my mother: all the afternoon she has been watching for you," Felicia said. The hand she held out to him was like a hand of ice; he held it a moment in his, chafing it gently; but she had turned her head from him. He released her hand, sighed, and went to Mrs. Southern. She did not follow him.

One of Wilfred's gloves lay on the table near Felicia; she stretched out her hand towards it, drew it to her, put her cheek down upon it. She sat thus, listening to the murmur of voices in the next room, till,

stupefied by vague, dull pain, she fell asleep.

She was awakened with a start by the cautious closing of a door—the house-door; the candle had burnt out—she was alone in cold and darkness.

"He is gone," she thought; "I have slept away the last hour I may ever pass in the same house with him—stupid, miserable sleep."

"He is gone, mother," she said aloud, as she knelt down by her mother and rested her head on her lap.

"Wilfred says that you look very ill, my child—is it so? Lift up your head, dearest."

She obeyed, repeating "He is gone, then, mother!" The mother read her face, the despair that made her tone so quiet, the desolation expressed by her deep eyes. She felt that her mother read her secret; she did

not care: he was gone—the struggle was over. She was sinking—sinking into unconsciousness, when her mother's words recalled her.

"He is gone for to-night, love. He has taken leave of me, knowing that I do not rise early now: in the morning he comes to bid you good-bye. You are deathly cold, darling. Felicia!" she added solemnly. "I say only this, and let my few words have weight: if you sacrifice your happiness for me, you will make me wish, and will make me pray, that God should take me out of this world at once!"

"Mother! I have not made, I do not make, I will not make, any sacrifice for you!" Her tone carried conviction with it, for what she said was true: all her life she had never contemplated the possibility of parting from her mother; if she sacrificed her happiness it was for Wilfred—Wilfred, whom she felt to-night could not be happy

unless he believed her happy. Oh! how should she escape from this maze of doubt and contradiction into the clearness of simplicity and truth?

Though Mrs. Southern was a talker, on some subjects she was as reserved as the most silent of women—she did not probe her daughter's heart; she said no more than, "God guide you, child; consider your own heart—God guide you."

One more wakeful night, hearing the Minster chimes through all the long hours of darkness. With dawn light seemed to come to her mind.

"Am I not acting a lie in letting him think that I do not love him?" she asked herself. "Can this ever be right? I will be true to-day, and let God order all else. The mere knowledge of his love should have made me infinitely happy; had I not been doing wrong, wrong to him, it

would—it must have done so. I will be true, and leave all else to God."

She rose, and found the morning fair and mild. "I am very glad he will have a pleasant journey," she thought. When she stood before her glass her own face looked more familiar to her than it had done for many a day. She made her mother's breakfast and took it to her, but she could touch nothing herself this morning. She had risen so early that she had to wait some time before Wilfred came. "If he should not come?"

Her heart sickened with wistful expectation. When she heard his step and voice it seemed literally to die within her, and she grew cold and faint.

"Your mother told me to come this morning," he said. "She thought that it would grieve you if I went without bidding you good-bye, and I could not 'wake

you last night; you had looked so weary, I was glad to see you sleeping. Was your mother right? Is it right of me to be here?"

"Oh, yes!" She could not look up as she gave him her hand, for her eyes were heavy with tears. Presently the heavy tears fell. Then she raised pure, clear eyes to his, and tried to speak. She was fair again now—very fair: her blood was eloquent, her heart beat quickly. His eyes told her so plainly that she was fair, that her eyes fell again, and a soft blush mantled her cheek.

"Your sleep did you good, Felicia, and you rested well last night. I could almost be sorry to see you looking so glad to-day, it seems as if you rejoiced that I am at last going!"

His face was haggard and wan enough, she saw. She felt ashamed of her own bloom as she answered—

"I had no rest last night. For many nights I have had no rest—I have not been truthful, and I have had no peace. I did not trust you as I ought, and I have been very miserable."

Her blush deepened as she spoke.

Wilfred recoiled.

"I had no right to your confidence—I have now no right. I desire no confidence," he said, hurriedly. "If you had loved me you would, I know, have had no secrets from me. But you think too well of me if you think I can bear to be told of your love for another, and not—not hate that other! No! no! forget those hasty words—I will not hate anyone whom you love. Tell me all: if it is in my power to help you, or your—your lover—I solemnly declare I will help you, or him. This is what I promised—what my promise meant—when—"

"What did my words mean, Wilfred, when

I told you that you would éver be my *dearest* friend — that nothing, no one would ever become between us?" she asked softly, and with downcast eyes.

"They meant——"

Wilfred bent towards her with agonized eagerness speaking from his face, but he did not draw nearer to her.

She rose from her seat, went close to him, faltered a moment, then knelt down at his feet, resting her hands on his knees.

"They meant" — she looked up now straight into his eyes—"if you had not been so good and humble you must have seen that they meant that I loved you better than I can love anyone else—I love you with all love!"

He snatched her up into his arms and held her there. Her poor weary head found rest, at last, upon his shoulder—her heart

found rest upon his heart. For a little she knew nothing but this rest—thought of nothing but this rest—nay, for a few moments she knew not even this. He clasped her close, but so tenderly!—tenderly as a mother clasps her babe. This rest was short and perfect!

At last, pressing his lips on her sealed lids, he roused her by one word, softly uttered—"Mine!"

"Yes, always yours in the future, as I have been always yours in the past; but not all yours yet—perhaps never. I am earnest, dear Wilfred. This morning I promised myself that I would be true—that I would act a lie no longer. Do not let me repent my confession. No! I never can repent it," she said, blushing vividly. "But do not let me have to strive with you; for I am weary of striving—of striving against my own heart."

"In anything reasonable, dear child, your will shall be mine. Be calm, believing this, and tell me what it is that you desire."

"To live here with my mother for the present, Wilfred—for at least two years."

"Two years!—two springs, two summers, two autumns, two winters. Well, they will pass—but why should we not pass them together?—why should we shorten our happiness by two years?"

Wilfred spoke this calmly, but holding her close, as if he never meant to part from her again.

She could not say to him, "In two years time I may be richer—our little income may be doubled then and I shall work during those two years and earn something." She looked up into his face, her head resting still against his breast, and said:—

"It will not shorten our happiness! Those two years will be happy years—such

happy years! It must be poor, weak love, that cannot make the absent present. Let me have my own way; leave me here two years with my mother. Do not make me want to fight against your will: I do not want to strive—I want to rest. Let me have my way in this; for, indeed, I feel that my way is right."

Her face, transfigured by love and joy, shone up into his with radiant light—shone with something of angelic light—steadfast in meekness.

"Oh! my darling! do with me as you will!" he said in a voice of inexpressible tenderness, which seemed to melt her heart and will, as sun or fire melt wax: he felt her tremble in his arms.

"It is well for me that I can put my trust in your goodness, your generous forbearance," she said. "I feel that I can put no trust in my own strength now or hence-

forward. Yet, let it be as I say in this—afterwards your words shall be mine—I will then say—'Do with me as you will.'"

"It shall be as you wish."

"Oh, why was I not true with you at once? Forgive me for having given you pain. I, too, have suffered!"

"I know it, my poor child!"

After a pause, she asked—"But, Wilfred, how could you believe that I did not love you? I cannot understand."

"That you should love me is what I cannot understand, my darling—my Schütz-engel!"

"Must you still go to-day, Wilfred—just as we have found each other?"

"Yes; because I wrote to my mother that I certainly would come to-day. You will write to me often?—and I may write to you?"

The manner of her assent gave him a

happy glimpse into the wealth and power of that kingdom of her love over which she elected him to reign.

It was soon time for them to part.

Facing the full light, they each looked with happy awe into the face of the other; each recognized the work of love in the other's altered, glorified countenance.

Wilfred paled suddenly.

"Two years, Felicia! What if God's angel, Death, should gather thee or me before two years?"

"God's angel, Death, can only do God's bidding, dearest; can only do what is—in all ways—best. Even then we should have known great happiness on earth: even then we should not be divided. I do not feel as if anything—not even death—could now deprive me of you!"

"God grant we—neither of us—may be

so tried. Two years, Felicia, darling! It is a long, long time!"

"It will pass quickly—and oh, so happily! I feel that I live to-day for the first time for many days. How have I deserved to be so happy?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"——in Ruh und Freude,
Frei von Furcht, zu gross zum Neide,
Lieb ich, ewig lieb' ich Sie."

"Two years is a great while. She should remember how long you have loved her—that you are no longer young. She should not try you so."

"I do not quite understand why she makes me wait so long; but I have full faith in her, mother—she is right, no doubt."

"You must not expect me to judge her quite as you do."

"Mother?"

"I only mean that I am not her lover. She is a sweet, gentle creature. I will love her dearly, for your sake and for her own; only you must not expect me to think her quite perfection, in all things, as you do."

"Not so, dearest mother—she is too perfect a woman to be perfection. She has faults, doubtless; but faults for which a man must only love her the more."

Gentle as was the check to the outpouring of his rapture which Wilfred received in this first evening talk after his return, it was a check, and served him as a warning: he forebore afterwards to speak much or otherwise than quietly of Felicia. His mother felt that he had placed his love under restraint and knew why he had done so: she studied to undo what she had done. As time went on she felt assured that she

was no less to her son than formerly: her place in his heart was a peculiar one —no love of wife or child could, she felt, ever displace the love he bore her. By degrees her joy in her son's joy absorbed all selfish elements that had hindered her heart from knowing unmixed joy—by degrees her love for Felicia became a love such as angels might look upon.

Lady Tregarther and her husband called on Mrs. Verbane a few weeks after Wilfred's return, to congratulate her on her son's engagement.

Mr. Tregarther spoke of Wilfred in a way which showed him to entertain positive, almost fatherly, affection for his secretary, and which brought tears to the eyes of Wilfred's mother.

"I envy you, madam," he concluded— "I envy you the possession of such a son, and the prospect of having such a

daughter! Ah! if I had such a son! If my dear boy had lived!" His own eyes twinkled with moisture as he spoke.

Lady Tregarther sat by, enduring much uneasiness; she feared that her husband would lower his own dignity in Mrs. Verbane's eyes by so exalting the character and importance of his secretary. She need not have feared that any words of Mr. Tregarther's could have raised Wilfred in the estimation of his mother higher than the constant companionship of more than five years had already set him.

"You know somewhat how I feel towards your son now, madam," Mr. Tregarther said, as he took his leave; "and I throw myself on your candour—what can I do for him? I have always felt that the remuneration he has accepted from me has been inadequate. Now I must and will do something for him. I am not quixotic and

disinterested," he said, with a glance at his lady, whom he wished away; "I want to fix him here, in my neighbourhood. Shall I build him a house? This will not be large enough for him when he brings home his wife and her mother. Turn the matter over in your mind, and let me know if this is the best thing I can do for him."

Lady Tregarther looked to see Mrs. Verbane quite overcome by the splendour of her husband's offer; but Mrs. Verbane showed no great emotion—she was gratified, and she said so in a manner at once meek and dignified. She promised to ascertain her son's wishes, and mentioned her own idea, which was, that an enlargement of Seafern Cottage would be all that Wilfred would desire.

Not long afterwards the architect who had built the Tyngelt Institute came to inspect the Cottage, and to plan extensive

enlargements and alterations. The consequence was, that the house was given up to workpeople for six months, during which time Wilfred and his mother occupied rooms at Tyngelt Place. The alterations were commenced in spring and finished by the autumn. The house, and a considerable piece of ground round it, were then presented to Wilfred—a free gift from his landlord and employer.

Young Hind, Wilfred's *protegé*, about this time married a daughter of one of the most respectable men of the place. On the death of his father—Mr. Tregarther's bailiff—he was able to do more than fill that father's situation, by virtue of his superior education and intelligence, and of his equal honesty and general trust-worthiness. He never forgot what he owed Wilfred, and was able to serve him and lighten his labours in many ways—both as regarded

Mr. Tregarther's business and affairs, and the good work carried on at the Institute.

The first anniversary of the day when Felicia's love had been confessed to Wilfred came round. During all the year all his life had been hers—somewhat in the same sense as all men's lives should be God's; but of every day some portion was more peculiarly her own; each day had a rest-time, a holy time spent in reading and in answering her letters.

On the morning of this anniversary he sat in his new study at Seafern Cottage, and wrote to her:—

"You were right, my own love; half the time of waiting you imposed has passed—passed like a happy dream—not an idle dream: the year has been one of preparation—of preparation for my great happiness—the looking forward to which, and learning to believe in which, has been

happiness enough. But, the next year, Felicia! Your home here is almost ready for you—my new book is almost finished—it will be hard to be patient through another year.

"Your mother hints to mine that you work too hard—give too many lessons in a day, and take too little rest. If so, this is wrong, my child. I did not think that you had been too proud to owe all to one who loves you as I do. Remember you are mine—that you have no right to hurt yourself—that, in doing so, you are hurting me.

"One whole year more—it can hardly be—you could hardly wish it to be if you knew the strength and depth of my longing to touch your hand and hear your voice—if you had tried to take any measure of my love.

"See, dearest—I must write no more.

I was patient and quiet when I began; now my heart is beating wildly for you, and I grow almost angry with you for your steadfastness."

In one of Felicia's letters, she said:

"I am happy—so happy, that I doubt if I can be happier. From so many little things I gain pleasure so intense that my life is rich indeed.

"Indeed, Wilfred, I do remember always that I am yours. I have the most careful care of myself, because I am yours; but nothing seems able to hurt me, or weary me—I have such rest in thinking that I am yours.

"I do not long for you, in the way you say you long for me. I can always call you to me when I will. Once or twice I have been startled, for I have pictured you so vividly that I believed I saw you with my bodily eyes.

"Last evening I was just a little tired, so I stayed at home when mamma went to spend the evening with an old friend of hers who is come to live at Silverthorpe. I wrote to you and read your dear letters; then I put myself on the sofa, meaning to read (something of yours, I will not tell you what); but I did not open the book directly—I let it lie on my heart, and I lay thinking of you till I fell asleep.

"I woke feeling rather strange, and found that you were sitting by me. My candle was gone out, but there was enough fire-light in the room for me to see you by. I did not speak to you at once, but lay looking at you. I did not feel frightened or even surprised—but so quiet, rested and happy. I know I was awake. Presently I spoke to you — you did not answer. I turned cold when—putting my hand towards you to touch you — I found that

you were not there, that there was nothing where I had seen you. Then I behaved like a disappointed, unreasonable child. I began to cry. I did not feel happy again till I got your sweet, dear letter this morning.

"I often laugh to myself, when I wonder what some of my employers would think if they knew a few of the things which I know about the sedate and precise Miss Southern."

"Another letter like the last," Wilfred wrote in answer, "And I must fly to you and claim you, at once. Of what stuff do you think that I am made? I do not believe in your being strong, you fair, frail lily of my heart.

"Sometimes it is with me as it was with you that night — sometimes you flit through the library at Tyngelt Place, as you did once — sometimes you sit by me

in my study at home, as you never did, but as, please God, you will do; but this is when my brain has been overworked, or my strength in some way overtasked."

That winter was one of great distress in the north, and even the quiet town of Silverthorpe shared the general fate; the following spring and summer were unsettled and unhealthy—during the autumn the mortality was great.

Mrs. Southern's letters to Mrs. Verbane at this time showed great uneasiness about Felicia, and were not always shown to Wilfred.

"She seems to feel that her own great happiness gives others all sorts of claims upon her." Her mother wrote once—"Her life is more entirely for others than ever now: she has acted as sick-nurse in several instances. I cannot but fear that she will wear herself out. She says that she feels

that she cannot do enough, cannot spend herself for others utterly enough, to show her gratitude to God for her own happiness. The fever so prevalent here is not infectious; I feel no alarm on that head—my fear is for the consequence of all this exertion, and of the painful excitement she has gone through."

Mrs. Verbane thought it right to show Wilfred the letter in which this passage occurred: after reading it, he wrote a solemn and impassioned appeal to Felicia.

Felicia's answer, beginning with an unwonted outbreak of love and longing, contained a mild rebuke:—

"That I am not my own, but yours, is my most urgent reason for doing as I have done," she said. "If I had acted otherwise, I should have dishonoured you. How could I refrain my hands from doing what little they could of the much that

was to do, when I remembered that they are your hands? Thank God! things mend round us daily, now — this early, bracing cold drives sickness away. Though I do not think I ever felt less in need of nursing and of rest, to please you, and to please mamma, I will rest now——." There was a break in the letter — then, in a feeble hand, followed these words:—

"I grew excited over this long letter, and, for almost the first time in my life, fainted. I tell you this that you may be sure that I am always and all true with you. It was nothing; I am going to bed—to-morrow morning I shall be quite well, please God."

Next morning a little note was written, which declared Felicia to be quite well again, only still "a little tired."

After that note came silence—no more of those loving letters, but silence. A heavy

and early fall of snow obstructed the roads in many parts of England. For a day or two Wilfred suffered this to be an excuse for this silence: but soon the silence grew and stirred for him—with images of dread.

"If Felicia were ill, her mother would write," Mrs. Verbane said. "It cannot be that—some accident must have occurred to the mails."

"It is a week since I heard. Mr. Tregarther had letters by the north mail to-day. I can bear this suspense no longer. I must go to Silverthorpe."

Mrs Verbane offered no opposition. Of this she was very glad, when, an hour after Wilfred had left her, a mounted messenger brought a telegraphic message from the neighbouring town:—

"Come quickly. F. S. is ill."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Fast this life of mine was dying—
Blind already, and calm as death;
Snow-flakes on her bosom lying,
Scarcely heaving with her breath."

SNOW-PLAINS bounded by snow-covered hills surrounded Silverthorpe: the town was purely white, and deathly silent—purely white and deathly silent as a maiden's death-chamber, as the little room, looking towards the hills, in which Felicia lay.

Day was closing in: fire-light was gaining over the sad twilight—it was only the ruddy fire-light that lent a life-like glow

to anything in that room. Felicia lay as she had long lain; the face on the pillows was as white, as calm—almost as cold—as one of sculptured marble. Her mother sat by her, keeping a hopeless, breathless watch—her face almost as calm, in its despair, as the face upon which she gazed.

The thick-lying snow muffled all sounds in the Minster Yard; for days no foot-fall had been heard to echo there. The physician who sat in the little parlour waiting for the final change, the end, was this evening startled by a light tap against the glass, and by seeing a face pressed close against the uncurtained window. Startled for a moment only: then he rose, and noiselessly opened the hall-door, admitting Wilfred, covered with snow-flakes.

"Mr. Verbane? Exactly. You have been long expected: I fear you come too late. There will hardly be any return of

consciousness now — nature is completely exhausted."

"She still lives?"

"And that is all. More utter prostration of the system I have rarely seen. She suffers no pain: death will come insensibly. We looked for you yesterday, and the day before."

"I have walked many miles. There was an accident on the line: I was stunned for a few hours—then communication was cut off. I could not hire any conveyance."

As he spoke he freed himself from his over-coat, and shook the snow from his hair; then asked—

"I can do no harm by seeing her?"

"None."

Hopeless grief is passionless. The first shock of a great sorrow numbs the soul, unless it is met and resisted by incredulity

which will not abandon hope. There was a dead calm in Wilfred's heart—a suspension of feeling: thought and sensation were alike deadened. He mounted the stairs slowly; with mechanical caution he opened the chamber door softly.

He approached the bed on the opposite side to that on which the mother watched. As he did so, she lifted her eyes in weary recognition, murmured—"God pity you, and pardon you—you come too late!" and then let them resume their unflinching and nothing-hoping vigil.

As Wilfred stood there in that white and silent chamber—as he looked down upon the white and silent face of his almost lost love, a change came over him—a revulsion of feeling. He rebelled against the mastery of awe-born despair which held him passive. A hot passion of desperate resistance surged up in him suddenly.

"I do not give her up—I will not! Felicia, come back to me!" he cried, and his voice sounded like a trumpet-call through the hushed house, as, bending over her, he repeated her name. Such subtle change as showed it was not a face of marble stole over the countenance of the dying girl. He saw it and hoped—her mother saw it and feared; he threw himself down by Felicia, laid his face against hers upon the pillow, and cried:—

"Felicia! my Felicia, hear me!—return to me, if only for a moment, return to me!"

He took her in his arms now, held her breast to breast, pressed his burning lips again and again upon her cold mouth, and murmured over her words most passionately tender.

Mrs. Southern was roused to horror as she saw this.

"Oh, Wilfred, Wilfred! be calm," she cried, "let my poor child die in peace!"

He paid no heed to her, but, after a little, raised his head, pointed to the face resting on his breast, and said—

"Mother! this is not death. God gives her back to me—she will live!"

Even as he spoke Felicia's dim eyes unclosed, a faint smile dawned upon her lips, and her breast heaved with a long, deep breath.

The physician now approached the bed, laid a finger on the girl's pulse, pronounced that there was more vitality than he had expected, ordered stimulants to be administered freely and frequently, and spoke of hope. Promising to return before morning, he left the house.

Hour after hour Wilfred held his so nearly lost love in his arms.

It was long before she slept; he

watched the mists of languor, of a weariness that had been unto death, roll slowly from before the soft dove-like eyes, and he gazed upon the ineffable sweetness of the peaceful mouth, till, when the eyes were clear again to look into his, and the lips at last had power to form his name—when he knew that God had indeed permitted him to win his bride back from the jaws of death—the strength of his joy and gratitude overmastering him, blinding him by a sudden rush of tears, he laid his head down beside her and wept.

"So late!" Felicia murmured, when she heard the midnight chimes. "You and my mother must rest now—I shall sleep well to-night."

She moved her head from his shoulder to the pillow, smiled into his face, gently returned the pressure of his

hands, and sank into a warm, rosy sleep, with that smile still on her mouth.

Unbroken silence again reigned in the house; but it was the silence of night and of natural rest.

CHAPTER. XX.

"O we will walk this world,
Yoked in all exercise of noble end;
And so through those dark gates, across the wild
That no man knows."

"Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work;
And both commended, for the sake of each,
By all true workers and true lovers born."

"NEVER again to part!" On this Wilfred insisted.

"Meeting as we met, we must never again part. It is simply impossible," he said. "We neither of us care anything for idle ceremony or etiquette—nothing for the

gossiping comment of this place, which we shortly leave, nor of the place to which we go. We will not part again: when you are strong enough to go out—strong enough to travel—you shall fix the day for our wedding: after it we will all go home. Till then you must suffer me here—me and my mother."

Felicia's recovery was not rapid. Mrs. Verbane came to Silverthorpe that they might all spend Christmas together; but she stipulated that she should afterwards be allowed to return to Tyngelt alone, to make all things ready for the coming home of the bride.

After the early and severe cold of the autumn, Christmas-day came like a day of spring. On this day Felicia was, for the first time since her illness, brought down to the little sitting-room. It had been made gay and sweet—a bouquet of violets

and Christmas roses was on the table, and sprigs of scarlet-berried holly brightened the walls. Here Felicia and Wilfred kept holy day together—the two mothers having gone to the morning service in the Minster.

Felicia lay on the couch by the fire—Wilfred occupied a low seat by her.

"You are thinking, love—of what?" he asked, after a long silence.

"Hardly thinking—I was more sunning myself in my own happiness: the thought that God let you give me back my life is such a very sweet thought—my life returned to me through you, to be shared with you, seems so dear and beautiful. Had you not come I should indeed have died that night. So now more than ever I feel that my life belongs to you; feeling this, I love it and value it as I never did before—is this wrong?"

"Felicia, sometimes I could almost wish you a little different, a little less humble, that it might be possible for you to understand the nature of my love for you—the height and depth of my reverence for you. But, love, be ever as you are; it is good for me that my spirit should lie at your feet—and it is your humility, more than any other grace or virtue of yours, that has drawn it there."

A shadow of perplexity crossed Felicia's clear brow and eyes.

"It is a great mystery," she said, thoughtfully; "it makes me very happy to be loved; but what you have said of reverence puzzles, almost pains me. If I venture to compare myself with you, I can find nothing that you should *reverence*—I feel myself so ignorant, so shallow—I want your love, and nothing but your love: when you speak of reverence, I tremble lest it

should prove that you have loved some fancied Felicia, and not the real one. Do not look pained, dearest—I feel that every hour I spend with you makes me more worthy of you. Every day will, please God, lift me nearer to you; living with you always, I shall grow more and more like what you now believe me to be—at least, I shall pray God that it may be so."

"Your memory for evil fails you, Felicia; you forget some parts of my life. I will not speak of them now—we will quarrel when you are stronger." He noted a deepening flush on Felicia's cheeks, and over-much light in her eyes. "One thing I do, thank God, heartily believe—it is, that Felicia's husband must necessarily be a good, true man—that nothing fosters true manliness so much as the love and contemplation of such true womanliness as yours. You, dear child, must be content to have me owe much to you. If you choose,

you shall believe that I am very strong of mind, an intellectual giant, able to master things that transcend your apprehension; but then you must let me believe in the perfection of your child-like goodness and God-given wisdom, and find my best rest on this belief. If you can, you shall believe that I am, even in a high sense, a poet; but then you must be patient with my belief that your life is poetry!"

She had listened intently while he spoke; now, letting her head sink upon his breast, and clasping his hand in both hers, she said, a little weariedly, but brightening as she proceeded—

"Let everything be as you will—what I am, and what you are, God only really knows. I am content to know that I love you 'over and over, and through and through,' as I used to say to mamma—to know that I believe in the goodness and purity of your

every thought, and the nobleness of your whole nature. Oh, Wilfred, when I was at Tyngelt I heard so much, so many different things from so many different people, about you! When I saw you that night, and heard you speak for the miners, and then heard them speak of you, I knew certainly that though you might not always have been all that was manly and noble, you were then all noble. The joy this certain knowledge gave me was unspeakably great. Before, when we met the Tregarthers in London, and heard so much from them about a Mr. Verbane, I used sometimes to lie awake at night, feeling very unhappy, vaguely jealous of this stranger's noble usefulness, and anxious—oh, so anxious about you! To find you in this Mr. Verbane, and to feel again in your presence as I used to feel in former times—like a little child being taught by a dear master what it is only just able to learn—would have made me more

happy than I could have borne to be then, if you had not seemed so cold and distant, if I had not felt as if I stood such a very long way off you——."

"As I felt that you did and should, my child; for I constantly remembered the unworthiness of my past conduct—its cowardice and treachery, and felt myself unfit to stand in your presence, my child—my sweet, dear loving, and trusting child. Ah, Felicia!" he added, "I think a man can only fully understand our Saviour's reverence for children—his injunction to his followers to be as little children—when he loves a child-hearted woman with all the powers of all his nature! But, love, you have talked too much, I think—rest now, or your mother will scold me, seeing these over-bright eyes."

"Life is all rest for me," she said—"nothing but rest for me. Oh, why should I be allowed to know such great, such perfect happiness?"

When, by-and-by, they saw the two mothers coming homeward across the Minster Yard, Felicia said—

"Don't you think that some day we may forget which is which of the two mothers—which was once only yours, which was once only mine—loving them both so dearly—so just alike?"

The four who kept this Christmas-day together believe that they shall keep all future Christmas-days together: even when two only are left on earth, or it may be when only one is left.

Early in the new year Wilfred took his wife and her mother home to his mother at Seafern Cottage.

Of this husband and wife it may be said, that

—— "these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers;
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each, and reverencing each;
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other, ev'n as those who love."

From the schools and institutes of Tyngelt, and from those springing up in the neighbourhood, may come working men whose work will tell largely upon the world; men, whose strength for good will lie as much in the tenderness of their hearts and of their consciences, as in the keenness of their intellects or their might of moral muscle.

Wilfred's Felicia is the Felicia of many homes. A wife—rejoicing in a justified faith in the high possibilities of humanity, and with a heart at rest, because of the perfectness of its love and its conviction of the perfect worthiness of the one loved—may often lead two lives and work two works in the world—may do an angel's work and a woman's, working good both consciously and unconsciously. Without pain, save such pain of pity as angels feel—without the slightest sullying of her white robe of child-like faith and love—she may walk this earth

gloriously free, and cause the light and the breath of heaven to penetrate its darkest and foulest places.

Women whose hearts have found no rest either on God or man, throwing themselves, whether with arrogant or generous temerity, into the first work so-called "good" presented to them, may lower and pollute their natures by familiar contact with things impure, and so cease to have any power of good over those for whom they have blindly sacrificed themselves; but for Felicia—the meekness of whose faith in God, and the quietness of whose love for her husband, are the pledges of the stability and perfectness of this faith and this love—there exists no such danger.

THE END.

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